Be Thou Faithful Unto Death

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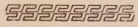
BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH



Confirmation Sermons and Addresses
by Lutheran Pastors in Germany
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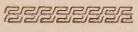

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BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer.

O Lord, our God! Our fathers have told us, and we have learned in our own experience that all depends upon Thy blessing. Thou art the Father of lights, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and Thy mercies are new every morning; of Thee the whole family in heaven and earth is named. To Thy gracious care we commend these children. Look down upon us in mercy, and grant Thy Holy Spirit to Thy glory in Christ and to our salvation. Amen.

The words from the Book of books which we give these young persons as their motto for this present hour and as the guiding-star for their future life, are found in the

Revelation of St. John 2:10.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Beloved sons and daughters: The present hour fills you with holy joy and solemn earnestness. Sustained by the love of parents and grand-parents, and accompanied by the prayers and good wishes of brothers and sisters, sponsors, relatives and friends, you have come in solemn procession to this altar, with the confession of faith upon your lips and the vow of fidelity in your hearts, as your reply to the exhortation of the Lord which we have just heard: *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* It is

the Head of the Church who speaks to you thus. He addresses Himself first to the Church at Smyrna, but then also to every Christian congregation, and to every soul that has come to faith. Jesus Christ, whose passion we now commemorate, whose cross stands here on the altar, and who is the same yesterday, today and forever, drank for you also the cup of Gethsemane, bore the cross up Calvary's hill for you, and for your sakes also cried out in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" You also He has redeemed, secured and won from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death. And by so doing He has acquired the right now and evermore to say to you and to every individual soul, "Be thou faithful unto death." He who tells you to be faithful, was Himself faithful unto death. He has loved you with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness has He drawn you from the hour of your holy baptism.

It is fitting that the baptismal font should be decorated with flowers and palms; for the present hour points back to the baptismal font. Confirmation is the ratification of the baptismal covenant. Among you are some whom I myself baptized; others there are whose mothers I once instructed and confirmed; and still others whose brothers and sisters I confirmed in past years. But whoever the minister may have been who baptized you, the baptism was always, by virtue of the institution of Christ, a gracious water of regeneration; it was always on God's part a covenant which stood fast, though the mountains departed and the hills were removed. Among you are some who at an early age have lost father or mother. But thanks be to God, even over their graves there is One who has said to us, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"—One who assures us of His abid-

ing love, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so I pity them that fear me,"—and again, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Through your baptism, the Lord says to you, "Fear thou not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." As Jacob, the patriarch, in his flight toward Haran, heard the promise of God, saw the celestial ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and confessed on the following morning, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven",—so you also, though all unknown to yourselves, have been no less mightily and powerfully surrounded, fondled, sanctified and blessed by the grace of God, as certainly as your baptism has been a baptism unto Christ's death. As we read in John 4 that the inhabitants of Sichem said to the Samaritan woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world",—so you today say to father and mother: "We thank you, that in our infant days you laid us in Jesus' arms. Now we ourselves have awaked to a conscious faith. What you and our sponsors vowed and confessed in our behalf, that we ourselves will now vow and confess before Him who has said, *"Be thou faithful unto death."*

In what shall a Christian be faithful unto death?—In two things: *Faithful in Obedience to God's Law; and Faithful in the Confession of the Gospel of Christ.*

Faithful in obedience to God's Law. I will at this time emphasize only three commandments. Not as though I would make a distinction in the law between one commandment and another. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," says St. James. I will mention three commandments simply as examples.

The Fourth Commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Well for him who is able for many years to call father and mother his own on earth! Well for you, ye parents, that you are able today to celebrate the day of your children's confirmation! What solemnity fills your soul today! You feel transported back to the hour of your own confirmation. You think of the perils from which the lives of your children have been rescued. In how many times of distress has not our gracious God spread His wings over you! But they also, from whom father and mother have been called away, and who journey in spirit to their graves, shall keep the fourth commandment, shall hallow the memory of departed parents, shall treasure their glorified image in their hearts, and accept a blessing from the hands that have long been cold, and lie folded in lasting slumber.

Another commandment: "Thou shall not commit adultery." Alas, daily it is necessary to pray, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart." Daily we are to look upward to the crown which is promised in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Daily the sixth petition, "Lead us not into temptation," is to be our shield and sword and helmet, so that, though we may be assailed, we may at last prevail and gain the victory. Therefore, do not run into temptation. Be not led astray, and lead not others astray. With this object in mind, choose your friends and your reading. To this end, be earnest in your communion with God. Make a covenant with your eyes, that your heart, which is meant to be a house of prayer, may not be desecrated and degraded to a den of iniquity.

The third commandment which I have in mind is the eighth in the catechism: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Be faithful in keeping this also. Is

it not a fact, that in all our relations with the family and the community, the fundamental condition of mutual confidence is truthfulness! In public life also, every idle word is equally a vicious word. Satan is a murderer from the beginning, because he is a liar from the beginning. Therefore give no place to sinful conversation, that the peace of your hearts may not be disturbed, that the seal on the letter of your redemption may not be broken, that the Holy Spirit may not be grieved.

When the Lord says, "Be thou faithful," he means, in the second place, faithfulness in the confession of the Gospel. The twenty-first of March, the beginning of spring, occurred this week. Already a mild, soft breeze blows over the earth; but how much sunshine and rain must follow first before the leaves develop, the blossoms unfold, and the fruit appears. So the day of confirmation is the beginning of spring. But faithfulness is more than a beginning of spring; it is a continued following of the Lord, a daily enduring, a daily conflict, a daily denial of self. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." When the glory of Christ was manifested forth by his first miracle in Cana, the disciples believed. But when the other hour came in which the sponge dipped in vinegar was placed at the lips of the Crucified One, the same disciples fled and were scattered. It is easy and a matter of course, that in the hour of confirmation, before the eyes of father and mother, sustained by so much love and faithfulness, and surrounded by companions of like mind, you shall feel your faith and express it. But it is an entirely different matter when our faithfulness is put to the test, when our way becomes solitary, when the storm of affliction threatens the stability of our house of faith, and when we are to give by your actions a reason of the hope that is in us. It is easy and a matter of course, that here in this cathedral, while

the pastor lays his hand in blessing on your head, and the congregation earnestly prays for you, you should be in earnest in expressing what you feel in your heart. But when you go out into a hostile world, when all manner of antagonistic elements threaten you, when doubts on the right hand and on the left fly thick as snow-flakes and make your path indistinguishable and uncertain, when a thousand wicked hands are busy before your eyes seeking to tear the royal robe from the shoulders of our Saviour and to trample it in the dust,—it is then an entirely different matter to say, "If all become unfaithful, I will yet be true," and to reply to the question, "Will ye also go away," with the words, "Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the task set before you, this is by God's grace the gift of genuine Christian faithfulness.

You are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As such you are now to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Our Church does not shine with external pomp and show. She goes about in the form of a servant like her Master; she serves a kingdom which is not of this world. Therefore you should not despise her, but value her all the more highly. Based on God's Word and Sacrament, standing on the third chapter of Romans, "By faith alone," our Church is invincible; the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

Beloved sons! What I have so often told you in our hours of instruction may be summarized in the one word which applies to all, "Be faithful." Become genuine, true disciples of Jesus Christ! Become faithful members of our Evangelical Lutheran Church. Become reliable, patriotic citizens. In a word, become true men, Christian characters, not like Felix who said, "I would like to become a Christian,

but not now;" nor like Agrippa, who said, "I would like to be a Christian, but not altogether."—Believe with all your heart and with all your soul; stand up for the right, combat what is base and wicked and vulgar. Seek those who are of like mind as your companions, that they may support you by their prayers and example. Be faithful to your Saviour Jesus Christ.

Whatever position, splendid or lowly, beloved daughters, shall some day according to God's will be allotted to you; whether you shall be led upon dark or light paths—there is in reality, in addition to humility and meekness, only one adornment for the Christian woman, and that is faithfulness unto death, faithfulness in that which is least. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much," says Christ. If your path leads over sun-lit heights, do not let yourselves be deceived by flattery, vanity and pride. And if your path becomes dark, do not make your way still more burdensome by self-will, fretfulness and sensitiveness. Murmuring against God produces also murmuring against men. Be faithful in prayer and in the reading of the New Testament. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His words; she chose the good part, which should not be taken away from her. Love Him who first loved you, and who here says, "Be faithful."

"I will give thee the crown of life" is the promise. Much is asked in the words, "Be thou faithful unto death." But much also is promised in the words, "I will give thee a crown of life." Beautiful is the palm of peace, charming is the olive-branch of art and science, solemn are the laurels of war; but all these crowns pale and wither before the crown which Jesus Christ holds in His hand, ready for the victor.

What must I do to be saved? Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Dr. Rudolph Koegel.

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

I. Tim. 6:12. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

The apostle here reminds Timothy of two things. The first is, "Thou art called unto eternal life;" and the second, "Thou hast professed a good profession." And if we inquire as to the significance of this present hour, which has so often been the subject of conversation in your family circle, has been so eagerly longed for, and doubtless has been greeted with prayers, what is it but this, that this twofold address of our text has in part been fulfilled in these children, and in part is about to be fulfilled. "Thou art called unto eternal life," and "thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

When was Timothy, and when was each of these children first called to eternal life? Was it not, my beloved in the Lord, in the hour of their baptism? Wherever the baptism with which these children have been consecrated may have been administered, whether in this cathedral or in any other of the houses of God in this city, whether far away in a village church or in the midst of the family circle,—in any case it was an incorporation of the child in the kingdom of God, a grafting of it upon the true vine, Jesus Christ, a sprinkling with the first gifts of the Holy Spirit, an assurance of the forgiveness of sins, a bestowal of the right to say, Abba, Father. All that Christ acquired for us on the cross is in-

cluded in the holy sacrament of baptism. The school and the Church instruct the child in these things, parents and sponsors train it up in them.

When, last fall, we celebrated the Luther-year and journeyed to Eisleben in order to do honor to the memory of the Reformer, it was with a double purpose: to celebrate the day of Luther's baptism, and the day of his happy death. And although none of us is a Reformer, every Christian should hold two days in honor: the day of his holy baptism and the day of his blessed departure from this world. Between the stone of the baptismal font and the stone that shall mark our grave lies a long pilgrimage, and every day of it cries out to us: "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

The history of the Middle Ages tells of crusades undertaken by thousands of Christians for the purpose of reconquering the Holy Land. On the shoulder of every crusader a red cross was fastened, and he was told: "God wills it." When holy baptism was administered to us, and the minister of the Word said, "Receive the sign of the cross on the forehead and the breast, that it may be a light in thy spirit and a flame in thy heart," we also were called to undertake a crusade; then we also were told, like the crusaders, "God wills it": "fight the good fight of faith."

"With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One
Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabbaoth Lord,
And there's none other God,
He holds the field forever."

"Follow me," is the command of Christ, not only in the days of Lent, in which we now are, but on every day of a true Christian pilgrimage.

Who are our foes?—There is the fleshly world around us, and the wordly flesh within us; there is Satan, who seeks to become our ruler and commander. But however numerous the foes, however fierce and hard-fought the battle, the victory shall belong to our heavenly Champion, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One. He says to us: "In the world ye shall have tribulation. Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Our Catechism jubilantly declares, "Redeemed, purchased and won." That is our hallelujah. And our song of triumph is, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

With what weapons?—If I desired now to repeat the examination of this youthful throng, which was held yesterday in the chapel, I should, I hope, receive from each one the answer, "Our weapon is the *Word of God.*"

When Christ went into the wilderness and into the temptation, His trusty "shield and weapon" was the word, "It is written." And when the day came on which He was betrayed, He declared to His disciples that thus must it be, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

How often, my dear sons and daughters, have I besought you: "Enter upon no day without God's Word. Begin no journey without taking your Psalter or the New Testament with you as your best companion. Read God's word, not for the sake of other persons, but for the sake of your own souls. Study it; but study it, not only in order to learn it by heart, but to experience it in your heart. Use it as your weapon, and you will win the victory.

The other weapon:—*Prayer.* The sword of the Word of God has a hilt. That hilt is fashioned in the form of a cross. And this hilt must be grasped with hands that are folded in prayer. When Jesus in Gethsemane looked upon his sleeping disciples, he said to them: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." He himself thrice bowed his blessed brow into the dust of Gethsemane while He prayed. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He prayed Himself and His own safely through that time of sorrow, and into His heavenly Father's hand.

Therefore, though the world would offer you the intoxicating cup of pleasure, or though grief and dismay would entangle you in the toils of despondency and despair—never let go the weapons: The Word of God, that two-edged sword, and Prayer. Once more: "Follow me," says Christ.—"Fight the good fight of faith."

Beloved sons, wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to God's Word. It will not always be so quiet and solemn around you; and you will not always carry with you that firm determination to hold fast your good profession which now animates you. There will come days which do not please you, days on which the wicked foe fiercely assails you. Will you then earnestly take up the fight and prove that your Christianity is not an empty phrase but a power of God? When ridicule seeks to entice and mislead you into unbelief, when falsehood would ensnare you, when impurity would immure you in reckless sensuality, when a wavering mind causes the scale to incline now to the one side and then to the other,—will the echo of this hour of confirmation resound in you then: "Fight, fight the good fight of faith?" As sons you may some time be called upon to fight for your country. But here another

fight is meant. How many confused and distracting voices there are out in the world calling to us; but Christ alone is our peace. How many a hellish lie passes current, and how much demoniacal power is exercised by the worldly spirit of the age; but Christ, who is the truth and our peace, is also alone our freedom. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." There is a proverb which says: "To be a man is to be a fighter." More correctly, "To be a Christian is to be a fighter." If a fish is dead, he floats with the current; but if he is alive, he has power to swim against the stream. Therefore be fighters. "Be not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

My beloved daughters, it may appear to some of you that the words, "Fight the good fight of faith," are not applicable to you. You are, it seems, safe in the quiet enclosure of a protected existence. Many of you are still under the oversight of father and mother. To many of you it may seem as if only a life full of golden sunshine were before you, without a cross, without a crown of thorns, without a rock. And yet as surely as you would be Christians, you also must fight the good fight, the fight of faith against unbelief, the fight of simplicity against vanity, the fight of mercy against selfishness, the fight of obedience against obstinacy and self-will. Remember, beloved daughters, that it was female disciples of Jesus who were the last at the cross and the first at the grave on Easter; that they remained heroines, steadfast in the faith, when the disciples themselves, disheartened, had thrown away the standard of the cross. You know that the hymn which you have often sung, "Wake, wake, for night is flying," contains the words, "Come forth, ye virgins, night is past!"—Let not the foolish spirit of the age make you lose

sight of your goal. Ever remember: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." O that the May-dew of baptismal grace may remain upon your brow! O that your eyes may ever shine with the reflection of a hidden future world, with love, meekness, humility, and joyful self-sacrifice! Give your entire life to the seeking of an eternal crown. "Fight the good fight of faith."

Paul adds a second exhortation: *"Lay hold on eternal life."* To-day is the twenty-first of March, the beginning of spring. But however beautiful the calyx of the flower, however full of presage and yearning the newly awakened nature, we know that the flower falls, the grass withers. All the bloom and glory of the flesh decays like the flower of the field! But the spring which comes from the world beyond is permanent. This is the incorruptible and unfading heritage of eternal life, of which Paul says: "Though our outward man perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." A breath of this eternal spring has doubtless been felt by these children in their instruction. It is true, much is still wanting from the full development of their inner life. Luther says: "Christianity does not consist in having become, but in becoming." And the apostle acknowledges, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." But some time, my dear congregation, it must become spring time in the heart. Some time there must be obedience to the exhortation: "Lay hold on eternal life."

What a festival we shall keep on the day after to-morrow! Many of you will then approach the table of the Lord. "The bread which we break in the Lord's Supper, is it not

the communion of the body of Christ? and the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" And to every one that approaches the Lord's table, the promise should apply: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

O that I might once more urge it upon the consciences of parents and children, that confirmation is not a dismissal, that it is not on the part of the Church a delivery of the catechumens over to the world and its sins, but a laying them upon the heart of Jesus Christ, a declaration before God and men that they have attained their majority, an assumption of the duty henceforth to confess Christ before God and men, an admonition that cannot be ignored: "Lay hold, lay hold on eternal life."

There is one part of our text which I have not, indeed, overlooked, but which I have reserved for the conclusion of my discourse. You will remember that Paul says to Timothy: *"Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."*

Who are the witnesses who have appeared here in God's house?—First of all the parents, who greet this day with tears of joy. Then the sponsors, who once said yea and Amen in behalf of these children at their baptism. Then many members of the congregation, of whom I dare hope that they have been brought here not only by an idle curiosity and contemptible inquisitiveness, but by the desire to grow young again with these young persons, and to be confirmed over again with these catechumens. I have not yet mentioned all the witnesses. These children profess a good pro-

fession before many witnesses. Up yonder is the assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in the book of life, an assembly of the blessed spirits of the righteous. And if the Scriptures declare that there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, shall we not assume that the Church Triumphant is moved with joy over every company of catechumens which makes the vow of fidelity and the confession of faith? Many of these children have traveled the way of sorrow at an early age: they have lost father or mother, and stand here as orphans; but they know that they do not stand here forsaken. Before many witnesses, in the other world also, they profess in this hour a good profession.

For the sake of these witnesses, those who are living and are gathered here, and those who have preceded you into eternity, and for your own sakes, my dear children, lay hold on eternal life.

And now in conclusion: The entire time allotted to us on earth is in reality like the moment of shipwreck. In a shipwreck each one saves what he can. What shall we save? One thing is needful, one thing is enough: save your own soul: lay hold on eternal life. Upon the admonition of this first epistle of Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life," follows the song of songs of the second epistle to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Amen.

Prayer.

Thou hearest prayer, O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore unto thee shall all flesh come. We are poor and needy, but thou art rich in mercy unto all that call upon

thee. In the name of Thy Son we bow our knees to Thee and pray: Do thou say Yea and Amen to our vows. Whatever may happen to us in the days to come, grant us this one thing, that Thou mayst be our portion, and we Thy possession. Though we should lose many things, yea even though we should lose the whole world, what will it harm us, if we only save our soul! Take these children into Thy guardian care, let Thy angel accompany them to keep them in all their ways, lest they dash their foot against a stone. Let them become firm, and remain firm in faith and in confession. Let not the prayer of parents, sponsors, relatives, friends, and the whole congregation return empty, but hear it for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Dr. Rudolph Koegel.

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAYS.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly Beloved Children!

Why have you come here? You will reply, "We have come to be confirmed." Correct. I will confirm you, and shall do so with greater joyfulness than I have experienced in this holy act for years. Often I have performed it with hesitation, often sighs and scruples; but this time, in view of what I have observed during the time of your catechetical instruction, I am satisfied and confident. Let me say, that for years I have not experienced so much pleasure in this period of preparation. I always came to your instruction with heartfelt delight; indeed I always looked forward with pleasant anticipation from one day of instruction to the next. There are, indeed, even this time, weak ones among you, whose knowledge is yet small; but at any rate you have all shown a proper ardor. And I believe that a bond of affection has united us; you felt that I heartily loved you, and I felt that you heartily loved me. This fact may fittingly be emphasized, since experience has shown that love for the pastor becomes a bridge over which the hearts are led to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Thus I am enabled with joyful hope to confirm you. But if you should think that you

have come here only in order to be confirmed, you would be mistaken. For confirmation is not simply a transient act; on the contrary, the day of confirmation is the beginning of a new epoch in your lives; it is the beginning of a spiritual journey which you are now to undertake, and which for most of you will be in very truth a journey among strangers. For you will now no longer live at home by the side of father and mother, and under the oversight of faithful teachers, but you will go your way alone among strange people and surroundings, with a certain measure of independence and individual responsibility. What you are to do under these circumstances, let God's Word teach you. Hear that Word:

Matt. 7:13, 14.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

My dear children: I said a moment ago, that your confirmation is the beginning of an independent, responsible spiritual journey. When we travel, however, the way we take is of the utmost importance. Here the Lord Himself tells you that there are two ways, a narrow way and a broad way. He permits you to choose between the two. He does not compel you to travel on the narrow way; you are free—O fateful freedom—to travel on the broad road if you will. In order that you may take the right road, I will, on the basis of our text, describe to you the narrow and the broad ways,—their Beginning, their Continuation, their End.

I.

I will begin with the broad way. It has a gate which is wide, consequently also high, imposing and splendid, like the

entrance to a beautiful garden; a gate which strikes the eye and attracts attention. Who would not be pleased with it? It is so wide that everybody is able to pass through without hindrance or molestation. It stands open day and night whoever wishes can enter; and he can do so just as he is, whatever be his nature and character. There are no conditions to be met for entrance. "Walk in," is the greeting, "entrance is free; everybody is welcome; the more, the better." Above the gate stands written, "Come let us enjoy life while we may, and seek bodily pleasure while we are young." Through the portals we can hear from afar the noise of merriment and boisterous laughter; here there is a jolly time; here life is pleasant. What wonder is it that great throngs press onward through this wide gate! And if we observe more closely, we see that most of these persons are young. Alas, many who are still clothed in their confirmation attire already stand at the wide gate and hasten to enter with the crowd; for they can scarcely wait to enjoy the freedom and happiness which the wide gate promises them.

The other gate is narrow, low, small, so narrow, so low, so small, that the Lord at another place compares it to the eye of a needle. Its vicinity is lonely and quiet; for only seldom does any person come into it. If a conceited Pharisee, proudly erect in the arrogance of his self-righteousness, comes by and beholds the gate, he says: "I am to go in there? I shall bow and creep and crawl through there? How could such a thought ever occur to me?" With a look of contempt he passes on, and thinks, "That is for gross sinners, but not for a man like me." And he hurries on to the wide gate. If another comes laden with wealth, or with the honor and esteem of his fellow-men, and sees the narrow gate, he says, "I am to pass through there? To do that, I should have to renounce all that I have, give up that which

is my life, and resign those things to which my whole soul clings. That I cannot and will not do." And he also passes on.

True it is that the gate is not for such; the inscription above it tells us that much; for it reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of God. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Thus you see what kind of persons find entrance at this gate. It is the poor sinners who recognize their guilt, and repent and desire salvation. Though the gate is low, this does not trouble them; for they already lie in the dust; though it is narrow, they creep through it by that godly sorrow which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

I might indeed now ask you, my children, which gate you will choose. But I do not ask this; for there is something else that is more on my mind. I would ask you, ye grown-up members of the congregation, "Through which gate have you gone? Know that some time man must pass through this narrow gate if he would enter into life; and he who would spare himself the pain of repentance only increases for himself the dread of eternal perdition. Therefore, if you have hitherto passed by the narrow gate, consider! Now the gate is still open, now the Lord is yet waiting for you,—for you, for you. Perhaps to-morrow the gate will already be closed. Therefore hasten to enter in.

II.

And now, dear children, let me show you the continuation of both ways. Behind the wide gate there spreads out a broad road, as broad as the world is; on it every one can

go as he pleases, follow his own lusts and desires, live after the flesh and serve his idols. Only one thing is required on this road; namely, outward respectability, which like a wide, flowing garment conceals all manner of vices and sins. All that is necessary is that outward appearances should be preserved. The people who travel on this broad road often preserve the semblance of religion; *i. e.,* they frequently come to church, they sometimes even come to confession and the Lord's Supper, but they do not permit this to interfere with their wordly life. These religious observances are a secondary matter to them, to be attended to occasionally. The chief consideration with them is, to enjoy life.

"And many there be" who travel on this broad way, says the Lord. On it travel multitudes of all classes of society, the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. And the great number of those traveling on this way give it an immense power of temptation. One carries the other along with him; or rather the individual is carried along by the crowd. If his conscience reproves him, the world understands how to quiet it, and says, "What so many do, what practically all do, must be right." Such is the state of affairs on the broad way.

Quite different is it beyond the strait gate. There begins the narrow way, so narrow that there are few men who find it. The many do not see it; for it requires close attention to observe it. For the narrow way is nothing else but following the Lord. And He says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Would you travel on the narrow way? Then must you be hard and inexorable toward the old natural man within you. For the natural man does not wish to know anything about following Christ, but wishes to travel with the world in ease and comfort on the broad way. So

perverse is this natural man, that the Scriptures know no other advice to give but that we should crucify him with the affections and lusts. And it tells us, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." This is the cross which we must daily take upon ourselves, the cross of conflict and strife with ourselves, which often becomes so severe that the cold sweat breaks out upon our foreheads. And while this conflict is going on within yourselves, you will also have to contend against the world; for the world hates those who do not take part in its disorderly doings, and persecutes them with ridicule, mockery and slander. Those who travel on the narrow way are a small flock.

III.

This is indeed a burdensome road, a road full of thorns and crosses, a road of conflict and strife. The broad way, on the contrary, is a road of pleasure and delight, of comfort and enjoyment. But take note of the end of both ways; for the end is the matter of chief importance. Whither does the broad way lead? To destruction! To destruction? Yes, to destruction. Not I but Christ, who is eternal love and truth itself, says so. You can therefore travel on the broad way, and there enjoy many pleasures without God,—but the end is destruction. You can live after the flesh, as the natural man desires,—but the end is destruction. For this you must remember well: each of the two roads has a gate at its end also; only the gates are exactly the reverse of those which stand at the beginning. At the end of the broad way is a little low portal, and before it there stands a dense crowd of the unnumbered throngs who have traveled the broad way; they all desire to pass through. But at the portal sits Moses, holding up the ten commandments before them, and asking,

"Have you kept these?" Loud resounds the reply from the crowd, "No, we have not kept them." On the other side of the portal sits John the Baptist, and he asks, "Have you repented and sought forgiveness?" And again the reply comes from the dense throng, "No, we had no desire so to do." Look, then, at the inscription above the portal of exit: "Cursed be every one that continueth not in the things that are written in the book of the law to do them." In mortal terror, each seeks to pass through, for their conscience urges them forward; but the portal is so narrow, so small, that they must leave behind them all that was dear to them in their life-time. Only the bare soul, solitary, poor and empty, creeps through; and behold, behind the portal, which looks like a grave, is the devil, waiting. Swiftly he seizes the soul as his long sought prey, and carries it to hell, "where their worm shall not die, and their fire is never quenched."

Now I ask you: Who has a desire to travel on the broad way? You answer with one heart and mouth, "No one, no one. God preserve us from the broad way." Yes, God preserve you from it. Walk, on the contrary, on the narrow way. If you must there crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, it is only the old man that will die; and the more he decreases, the more the new man, which is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, will increase. If you must go your way misjudged, ridiculed and slandered, and be only a handful among the great multitude which knows its power and uses it, what does it matter, since Christ declares, "If ye suffer with me, ye shall also reign with me." If you must give up much and lack much, according to the words, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any",—what does it matter since the Lord here

already pours out for you an overflowing cup of holy spiritual joys? And what will it be in that day when you reach the portal at the end of the narrow way, a portal that is as wide as heaven itself, and that leads into eternal life. Carried by the angels the soul will there enter in triumph; what it has gathered of knowledge in its earthly life, what has been bestowed upon it of heavenly gifts and powers, what it has gained by a life of faith, shall go with it. Rich in God the soul shall enter the Father's house, and its good works shall follow it. It shall be crowned with eternal glory.

My dear children. Now you declare as with one heart and one mouth, "We will all walk on the narrow way." Let your sincere and earnest resolution be that no difficulties or trials shall turn you aside from Christ; but that with all your heart you will steadfastly follow Him to the end.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

LIFE A JOURNEY.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

In the Lord Beloved Children:

Palm Sunday has come, and with it the day of confirmation. There is something remarkable in connection with this day. It may be said that it has become the favorite day of the congregation. Although the service on this day is the longest in the whole year, it is not too long for the people. On this day the church is fuller than usual, and many come who at other times are not in the habit of appearing in God's house. This may be explained by the fact that this service deals with the children. They are to confess their Christian faith before God, and then to be confirmed as independent members of the Christian Church. What father or mother could remain at home at such a time? The sponsors come as well as the parents; for on the day of confirmation they are released from their sponsorship; they perform the last act of their office; for as they once brought these catechumens to the baptismal font, they now accompany them to the altar.

It is natural, therefore, that this should be such a favorite day. And yet among the three important days before these catechumens, it is the least; for confirmation is only the entrance into the outer court. The day of confession is greater; for it leads into the holy place in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins. But Holy Thursday [or Easter] is

the greatest of all, because it leads to the gracious and wonderful Supper of our Lord: it is the crowning day of them all. It is somewhat strange, therefore, that on the day of confirmation the church should be so full, and on the day of communion generally so empty. Is it not remarkable?

The day of confirmation is a day of deep emotions of the heart. The children usually are moved; parents perhaps still more. There is scarcely a service in the year when the hearts are so much like good mellow soil as on the day of confirmation. So many hopes center about this day,—and alas, how many of them fail of fulfillment! Am I not justified, therefore, in saying that the high favor in which the day is held is remarkable? By this I do not mean to say that we should think lightly of the day. I have only sought to set its significance in the right light, and to warn you not to build upon the feelings or emotions, but on a foundation which does not waver or yield, the Word of God. Listen to what it says:

Jer. 6:16. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

These words of the Lord apply to you, dear children. They are meant to impress upon you that *Life is a Journey.* In considering this truth let us, 1. Inquire concerning the way; 2. Take note of the perils to be encountered on it; and 3. Keep our eye upon the goal.

I.

Whoever would travel must know the way, and must ask which is the right way. For this reason the prophet places us out in the world where there are many ways, and tells us first to consider the old paths which we have already

traveled. Your first path led to baptism. You were baptized into the name or the nature of God, the Father, *i. e.*, you became children of God; you were baptized into the name or nature of the Son, *i. e.*, you put on Christ, and became branches on Him the Vine; you were baptized into the name or nature of the Holy Spirit, *i. e.*, the Holy Spirit took up His abode in you and made you His temple. All this was done, not for a moment nor for a few years, but for your whole life. Dear children, do you know any higher honor than this, that you have become children of God; or a more blessed fellowship than this, that you are members of that holy Body whose Head is Christ; or a holier consecration than this, that the Holy Spirit has chosen you for His habitation?

Your second path led you to the school, in order that the words of the Lord might be carried out in your case: "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." This has been done for eight years past, and you cannot excuse yourselves and say that you do not know the doctrine of salvation. It has been set before you clearly and distinctly. To-day you have trodden the third great path to the altar of the Lord that you might confess the Christian faith which you have been taught, and might receive the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper. With this event the first part of your youth comes to a close. How beautiful an arrangement that this period should close at the altar! At the baptismal font it began, at the altar it ends. Accordingly we may say of the first period of your life: You began it with God, you end it with Him; could any path of life be more blessed?

Now life opens up before you. Which way will you take? First of all you must take the way of your calling which is

pointed out to you. You boys will be sent off to school or apprenticed to a trade. Do not let the hardships and trials of this period discourage you. All beginnings are difficult, and whoever would become a master or employer must learn and obey. You girls will remain in the quietude of the home under the direction of your mother, that you may learn self-denial, humility, discipline, faithfulness in little things, order and cleanliness. These are beautiful pearls in the crown of maidenhood.

What I have just said, dear children, refers to the earthly calling to which you are fitted. But in addition to this you have a higher calling, that is, your calling as a Christian. You boys are to become men of God. Therefore see and ask for the old paths, as the prophet says; namely, the paths in which godly men of old walked. I would remind you of Abraham; he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Then of Samuel, of whom it is written, that he was a servant of the Lord, "and grew on, and was in favor with the Lord and also with men." And finally of David, who was a man after God's own heart, and who from the depths of his heart prayed: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Take such men as your models, and imitate them; then you will become true men. He who believes is a man, for he is rooted in God. He who prays is a man, for he lives in and with God. Such men stand like strong oaks in the storm.

You girls are to become handmaidens of the Lord, like Ruth, who was a model of beautiful faithfulness and piety, and like Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet, and of whom the Lord said: "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be

taken away from her." Then you may become as Tabitha once was, and in the strength of the holy love of Jesus you may go about in the hovels of the poor, and help to save their bodies and souls from manifold dangers. Remember well, that in the whole New Testament no woman is mentioned who ever did any harm to the Saviour, but many who ministered unto Him with their substance. One interceded for him on the day of his death, while hundreds of men cried out, "Crucify Him." Others honored Him when He was dead; and of all the women who believed in Him, only one is mentioned in Scriptures as having fallen away from Him. This is high praise for your sex. See to it, that on your part you do not disgrace it. Imitate these holy examples, and then you will be walking in the right way.

II.

It is true, this is not easy. To-day, indeed, you all desire to tread the path of faith, of prayer, of the fear of God, and of obedience. But how many young persons are mentioned in Scripture who had the same purpose but were unable to carry it out, bcause they did not cut loose from the world and from themselves. Many followed the Lord for a considerable time. They traveled upward upon the way of salvation from the heights into perdition. Was there not one of the twelve disciples among their number? You see, therefore, that the good way has its dangers; and you know well the enemies who pursue those who travel on the way of salvation. From your youth you have learned their names in the third petition: "Such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh." Yes, yes, the flesh, in which sin dwells, and which clings to you and makes you indolent, —this enemy you have encountered in manifold ways. The world you will learn to know only too soon with its thousand

allurements by means of which it seeks to seduce young and inexperienced souls and to attract them to itself.

The third enemy, finally, the old bitter foe, knows you better than you know yourselves. He knows just what are the weak points in your nature and character at which he may attack and most easily overcome you. He will bring all his knowledge and skill to bear on you.—There are, therefore, dangers enough, and I could go into greater details, for much might yet be said. But I will rather select one point which seems to me to be the most important and which at the same time will serve to explain why so many, in spite of their good intentions, do not enter upon the right road or do not reach its end. It is, that walking upon the right way requires a complete turning about on man's part, a complete change in him, which by the Scriptures is called "conversion."

Since I desire that this most important matter should be firmly engraved in your memory, and the form of a parable or illustration is most calculated so to engrave it, I will, following the example of others, clothe the subject in the garb of a parable which is taken right out of life, and out of the life of our present day, a parable from the railroad. You are aware that the first train starts out early in the morning. It has first-class, second-class, third-class, and fourth-class coaches. Whoever will go along must be on hand in time; the bell rings to warn that the time is up. We must have a ticket, or we cannot ride along. Just so there is a train into the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the train-master and conductor. He calls men to go along, saying: Whoever will go along, let him make haste. Let us look at the train. In the first-class coaches there are few people; as the Lord says, "How hardly shall they that have riches

enter into the kingdom of heaven." In the second-class coaches there are also very few; for it is written, "These things are hidden from the wise and prudent." In the third-class there are more, while the fourth-class is packed full; for "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." The ticket is living faith or conversion of the heart. Now, then; here goes the first train, containing persons in their early youth, in the age in which you now stand. At this period the Lord calls loudly and distinctly. But in the morning people are still generally asleep, and do not care to get up so early. They say, "There will be another train." This corresponds with the saying of those who in their youth declare, "There is plenty of time for conversion; when we are older we will give attention to it." And thus it happens that comparatively few go by the first train; that is, few are converted in their youth. How do matters stand with you, my dear children? I am afraid that there are not many of you on this train; and when I look out over this large assembly, how many of those who are gathered here have failed to awake in time and have missed the first train!

Now comes the second train. We will say, the noon train; that is, at the time when men have reached maturity. At that time many a one thinks, "Now it is indeed time that I become a different man; now I must ride along." But just then perhaps a good old friend steps in the way, and says, "Why are you in such a hurry; there will be plenty of trains later. Come let us first have a good time for a while." Meanwhile the bell rings for the third time, and the train is gone. So it goes in the matter of conversion. A so-called good friend, but in reality a bad friend, of former days comes along and says: "What, you also intend to become good and hang your head? I thought you would not be so

foolish; life is so short, and therefore we must enjoy it while we may." Alas, how many permit themselves to be delayed, and lose their real opportunity.

Now comes the evening train, when man has grown old, and the gray hairs come and the teeth fall out. Then indeed the acknowledgment is made: Now it surely is time to go; —and many a one goes on this train. At last comes the night train, the last—when man is converted on his death-bed. The thief on the cross went with this last train. In his case it was, Ring the bell, take up the ticket, enter the last class, ride away, and arrive in Paradise with Jesus. It went with the greatest speed. It was all done in a brief time. Are you saying to yourselves: "We will do the same?" When any one has spent the whole day in idleness and neglect, must we not fear that he will miss the last train, like the thief on the left hand of the Saviour? And when any one has missed the last train his case is hopeless; for then comes the night, the dreadful outer darkness, of which the Lord says, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" and that night is eternal.

III.

My dear children, by means of what I have said I have tried to show you what your nearest goal should be; namely, true conversion to God. How often have we not prayed for this in your behalf in the public services. But after all the chief thing is that you should pray for it yourselves, as the Lord says: 'They that seek me early shall find me." You know also how those who have turned to the Lord are distinguished. Christ describes them in the words: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands.'

Then you will be like good trees, which grafted early, soon bear good fruit, and the longer the better. Then you will also find rest for your souls, as our text declares. For you will have peace with God. Therefore do not follow the prompting of your natural heart or of sin; for "sin is a reproach to any people." Go not with the world; for the world passeth away and the lust thereof. Let not yourselves be enticed by the old bitter foe; for I tell you, that ever since the world stands he has deceived all who followed him. But if you are converted and have the faith which justifies before God, then having gained faith you have gained all; for the just shall live by faith, here in time and there in eternity.

Dear children. As we are all here together to-day, so there will come another day when we shall all be gathered together again, even if meanwhile you should be scattered into all the corners of the world. God grant that it may be said on that great day: Lord, none of them is lost; they have all become Thine, and have all remained Thine; receive us all together into Thine eternal glory. Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

JESUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ Dearly Beloved Children:

Palm Sunday has come, and with it we have arrived at the goal for which we prepared ourselves with so much prayer and diligence. I might say that in one sense this fact is a source of regret to me. For having reached the goal usually means parting from one another. Only a few days, and then the majority of you will go away, some here, some there. And thus the fellowship which we enjoyed during the catechetical instruction will be at an end. I shall sadly miss it. For you have all grown dear to me, and I have learned to love you as a father loves his children. It was a genuine pleasure for me to instruct you. What could I rather wish, than that I might keep you here with me, and instruct and guide you further. But that cannot be. You are entering upon the riper years of youth, and must go forth to your life-work. And it is my greatest consolation to know that you will be entrusted to a Pastor who can care for your souls many thousand times better than all other pastors together, and that the Shepherd and Arch-bishop of souls, who thoroughly understands guiding and feeding His flock, will take you into His keeping. Hear what He says to you:—

Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

These are words of the Lord Jesus, spoken from heaven. St. John heard them from the Saviour Himself, from the kingdom of His glory. To-day these words are addressed to you, dear children. Let us follow these sacred words step by step.

I.

They begin with "Behold," in order to attract our attention; for immediately there follows something great and extraordinary; namely, the Lord says, "I stand at the door and knock." If a king or the President stood before your door, what an excitement that would produce. How you would rejoice over such an honor, open the door with haste, and gladly greet so exalted a guest. But now, according to this passage of Scripture, one who is more than a King or a President stands at the door. It is Jesus, your dear Saviour, who possesses all power in heaven and on earth, whom all the angels worship, and in whom alone there is salvation. He it is who stands at your heart's door and knocks.

He has often stood and knocked there. First of all, when you were brought to holy baptism, an event of which this open baptismal font, so beautifully decorated with a crown by your fellow pupils, reminds you. On the day on which you received the sacrament of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Ghost, the Lord offered you a crown that is worth more than all the crowns of kings and emperors. Of the latter it must be said, that they are a heavy and oppressive burden, especially in these days, when the Satanic malice of so many persons applauds the murder of princes as a noble deed. But the crown which Christ at your baptism held before you as your future heritage, is an unfading crown of glory in the kingdom of heaven. And on the day of your baptism you were called as children of God to seek

this crown, and to wrestle and fight for it. That was a loud knocking of the Lord at your heart.

In addition to this Christ has come to you in many dispensations of your life. Many among you have passed through severe illnesses; there was but a hand-breadth between you and death. Your dear parents will to-day recall with deep emotion how they sat at your sick-bed, and thought that they must give you up. Others have seen a beloved father or mother die; indeed, some have lost both their parents, and though still so young, stand here as orphans. How my heart was moved when in the course of your lives I read the words of consolation for your bitter sorrow, and how many tears were shed over it in my talks with you. What have all these dispensations been but a knocking of the Lord at your hearts?

To-day He again stands before the door. To-day His knocking is particularly distinct. This beautiful service, which is held on your account, and in such an extraordinary way—for you have been solemnly brought from the school, solemnly led to the church, solemnly gathered around the altar, and the eyes and hearts of all are centered upon you,—all this certainly says to you in unmistakable accents: This day is an important day. And if you did not understand its significance, your parents, your sponsors and relatives, yes the whole congregation would call out to you, "Dear children, the Lord stands at the door and knocks."

II.

And what does He want of you? He tells you clearly and distinctively. *You are to hear His voice and open the door.* This means just what He says in that other passage, "My son, my daughter, give me thine heart." For it is your heart

that He wants. If you should want to give Him all the money you may have saved, He would say, "I do not need it; for all the silver and gold in the world are mine." He would count it more if you were to give Him your head with all its knowledge and faculties. But all knowledge, if it is not controlled by the fear of God, will make refined devils, as the world to its horror and dismay now sees. And even if you should say to Him, "Lord, all that I know and am able to do shall be thine, and I will serve Thee with it," He would still reply, "Thy gift, indeed, is good, but it is still insufficient; I want your heart; if I do not have your heart, I have nothing of you; but if I have your heart, I have you completely, for the heart makes the man."

Is not this so in human affairs? What would it benefit a bridegroom, if he had a bride with much wealth and great beauty and of aristocratic position and rank, but had not her heart? How a father would grieve, if he had to say: "My son is, indeed, smart, and has learned a great deal; he will make something of himself in the world; but he does not love me; there is a deep gulf between him and me; he is, indeed, my son, but I do not have him, for I do not have his heart."

My dear children: This is just the way our Lord Jesus thinks and speaks. If you do not give Him your heart, you are not His. Will you not give it to Him? especially when you remember why He desires it; namely, because it is the worst part of you. Many a one has a good head or a stout fist, or is quick upon his feet. All these things are good. But with respect to the heart, all men are alike; the natural heart in all men is corrupt; for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, sinful words and unjust deeds,—in a word, sin reigns in the heart.

Have you not experienced this? Who is there among you whose heart and mouth have never been polluted by a lie? Who is there among you that has never grieved nor pained his parents? Where are the brothers and sisters who have grown up side by side as peacefully as two branches on a vine or a tree? Who among you has never felt envy, anger, hatred, and the source of all sins, selfishness? Was not your heart also deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? Now see: the Lord desires this evil, corrupt, deceitful heart in order that He may make something good out of it. Therefore, do not hesitate, but say, "Here Thou hast my heart, O dearest Saviour; I give it up to Thee, I will gladly be rid of it and receive another. Therefore take it into Thy holy hands, and create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Is not this quite simple and comprehensible? Even the weakest among you can do this.

III.

And if you do this, the Lord will also fulfill His promise in you. He will come in unto you. My dear children, remember well, that if Christ does not enter into the heart, others will. Your heart will not remain empty. It is a dwelling-place much desired and sought after. Three great and mighty foes seek for it constantly. You know them well; you have named them numberless times in your recitations in catechetical instruction. What these can make out of a man if they inhabit and rule his heart, you may see in the history of the Prodigal Son, who had and has millions of imitators. You may see it in the terrible end of Judas Iscariot, who from a child of God became a child of the devil. Do not say to yourselves: I will not let it go so far in my case. The Prodigal Son and Judas said the same

thing to themselves at first. But he who once lets these terrible powers gain control over him is like a man who incautiously walks along the edge of a precipice. At first perhaps he only stumbled a little, but the stumble turns into a fall, and the fall into an uninterrupted descent. The flesh rewards with shame; the world with husks; and Satan with hell. Would you desire to test this experience? Would you care to pass through this school of sin?

God forbid, you doubtless say in your hearts. Make haste, then, to open your heart to the Lord. How He will then hasten to come in unto you! And when He comes, He brings good cheer at once; for He says, I will sup with him. To-day you are invited to God's table. To-day you are authorized to partake of the Holy Sacrament. After the day of your baptism this will be the greatest and holiest day of your life. Here Christ comes to you bodily. He gives Himself to you, and where He finds open hearts believing on Him, He seats himself on their throne. O blessed are the hearts in which Christ reigns. He makes of such hearts a house of prayer; and when you have learned to pray aright, only then have you become the right kind of persons. And still more: He makes of the heart a Church, a sanctuary; so that the beautiful words apply to you, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," and so that you are enabled to follow his sacred footsteps.

Of these footsteps I will mention but two, and show you their blessedness. The one is humility. It is becoming to every age, but especially to youth. A humble youth, who is not ashamed of any work, a humble youth, who is ever ready to serve—such find favor with all men, and God gives them grace to become true men and noble women. This is one thing which Christ wishes to accomplish in us. The other

is wholesome discipline. Who more than the youth needs that the thoughts should be held in control, that they may not go astray? or the wishes and desires, that they may not degenerate into passions, which are called by this name because they produce passion or suffering? or who need more, that the whole man in all his conduct shall be kept in restraint lest honor and reputation be lost?

Dear children. All this the Lord desires to do for you; and if he dispenses such gifts of grace in this world what will He bestow upon us in our home above to which we are now all journeying? There He is waiting for us, there in those joyful halls great tables are spread, there a place is already appointed for each one, that we may sup with Him and He with us. O that we may all reach that heavenly home, and that none of us may be missing from his place! Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

YOUTHFUL HOLINESS.

Beloved Children:

There are five great days which mark off the period of your childhood; two of them stand at its beginning, and three at its end. The first two occurred fourteen years ago. One was the day on which you first beheld the light of day; but on this day only the natural man was born. A greater day was that of your baptism, for on this day the new man was born in you. Like a wild graft you were transplanted to the garden of the Lord. From the kingdom of the world you entered into the kingdom of heaven upon earth. Of this the baptismal font which stands in your midst should remind you. The chaplet of flowers upon it is a reminder of the imperishable crown which was held out to you at your baptism as the treasure for which you should strive. You have been brought up, taught, and instructed as children of God, as branches of the Vine, which is Christ, as the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Now your childhood is coming to an end, and its conclusion is marked by three holy days: the day of confirmation, the day of confession, which follows next Wednesday, and, the crown of all, the day, Holy Thursday, when for the first time you will approach the table of the Lord as His guests, and partake of the Holy Sacrament. Had there been no day of baptism, no day of confirmation could follow. Had not God in baptism made a covenant of grace with you, you could not come to confession. Had you not received the sac-

rament of baptism, the sacrament of the altar would not concern you. But because you have become members of the kingdom of heaven, God graciously receives you in confession, and permits you to find a place at His table.

With these three great days the first period of your life ends. They stand like three monuments on which are inscribed the words, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." But they are at the same time a consecration for the second period of your life which now follows. As confirmed Christians, who are established in the grace of God, as sinners who are forgiven and accepted by God, as disciples united with Christ, who have partaken of the body and blood of our Lord, as in the fullest sense the blessed of the Lord, you pass out from childhood into the riper period of youth. To-day you step upon the threshold of this new period. But this is so important a matter, that it must not be done without an understanding of God's Word. Hear what God's Word says to you:

Ecclesiastes 11:9. Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

These are the words of a king; for they were spoken by Solomon, the man who sat upon the throne of David, and who was famous throughout the world for his wisdom. And what does he desire to say by this admonition but this, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient," or this, that our Youth should be Holy. Let the subject of our discourse on this day of confirmation be:

Youthful Holiness.

1. Remember the dangers which threaten. 2. Use the

means which God offers you to attain it. 3. Contemplate the great reward which it will bring you.

May He, the fairest among the children of men, who after a perfectly holy childhood spent also a perfectly holy youth on earth, grant us in our deliberations grace and blessing from the throne of His glory.

I.

Beloved children: With my mind's eye I behold before me a young stately tree. With much love and faithfulness the gardener has cultivated it until it has grown beautiful and shapely. His work has succeeded well; for already the tree begins to bear fruit. He removes the prop by means of which he has hitherto supported it, and says: "It may now stand alone; it is strong enough." His eye rests with pleasure upon it. But see, his face clouds, for he is saying to himself: "Hitherto all has gone well; but will it continue so?" He knows what such a young tree must go through. He is not so much afraid of storm and wind, because these are necessary for its thriving; when storms blow the young tree to and fro, its roots will sink deeper into the earth and cling faster to the ground. But he trembles at the thought of night-frosts, and of bad boys who are so fond of breaking down young trees, or of damaging them so that if they do not die, they grow sickly or crippled.

Why I say this, you doubtless all understand, and I hope you have applied my words to yourselves; for the tree is a figure of you, my dear children. How many hands have labored with touching affection at your bringing-up. Think of your dear father; how he has provided for you. Think of your dear mother, how she has nursed and cared for you by day and by night. Think of your faithful teachers, who for

eight years have instructed you with inexpressible labor. Think also of me, for in the catechetical instruction I have devoted myself to you with all my love and strength. O, you do not know how dear children become to parents, teachers and pastors. How can we look upon you now without anxiety, when we call to mind the dangers which threaten you in the days of your youth. You must go forth into the world, and there the Lord's Word will be verified, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." There will not always be sunshine, but often dark and gloomy night. But that is not the only cause for our anxiety concerning you; for afflictions have their good uses, else God would not send them; and it is true that "Affliction turns the soul to God, and tribulation teaches us to heed God's Word."

There is something that harms youth like frost or bad boys harm a tree. It is sin. Know that every sin makes a wound, and if the wound heals, there always remains the scar. Every sin is a filth, that leaves an ugly internal stain which cannot be washed away with all the water of the world. Every sin is a secret poison which threatens the life of the soul; and even if we take an antidote, that does not undo the harm that has been done to the soul by the poison. Every sin brings in its train a curse which must be borne. Every sin creates a debt which must be paid. Every sin involves a penalty which must be borne. Every sin strengthens sin in its dominion, and this chain of slavery no man can break. Therefore, beloved children, fear and tremble at sin.

I desire, however, not simply to speak of sin in general, but to refer to the particular dangers which especially threaten youth. One of these lies in yourselves, in what is usually called your temperament, your individuality. One person is choleric, another phlegmatic, etc. Every such

temperament has in itself a bad side which may, however, become a good side. Peter, for example, was fiery and impulsive, and for this reason he fell into the deep sin of denying his Lord. Thomas was inclined to be melancholy, and consequently he almost perished through doubt and sorrow. Inquire of yourselves, therefore, what kind of a temperament you have, and remember that as long as it remains in its natural state, it is liable at any moment to bring about your fall. But if you are converted, the natural temperament will be glorified. Then a wrathful Moses becomes a model of meekness, and a destruction-breathing Saul becomes a merciful Paul.

Again we become anxious for you when we reflect that you are now about to step forth from the bounds of the parental home into the wide domain of the world, out of a salutary dependence into a certain independence, in a word, out of restriction into freedom. O, freedom is a precious possession, but it presupposes strength and a strong will, and you are yet so weak. How many before you sought freedom in unbridled license and impudence, and became the miserable slaves of all manner of sins and vices. Therefore do not forget what I told you some time ago, and what you then also understood: "True freedom consists in obedience to God's will;" and "The more truly any one becomes a servant of God, the freer he becomes." God help you to advance far in this blessed freedom of the children of God.

Further, be on your guard against pride and vanity. These follow young persons like their shadow. For if they learn a trade, or go to college, or enter upon some other position, they at once imagine that they are wonderful persons, and in their vanity scarcely know how to behave themselves. They take offense at every correction, and are fairly beside themselves if obliged to unbend. Dear children, if

the devil of pride would take possession of you, say aloud to yourself that in your apprentice period you are as yet nothing at all, but may become much if you pay heed to the words, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

The greatest danger, however, threatens you from the stronger power in man, that is, the flesh, from which none of you is free. I tell you that all the wars and battles in the world have not carried off one-half as many from the ranks of youth as the flesh with its affections and lusts. Who can count the youth with polluted body, with branded conscience, with corrupt imagination, with hollow eyes, with wasted strength, with enfeebled mind? Have you a desire also to become victims to the sin against the sixth commandment, and to have it said of you, "Honor lost, all is lost." God forbid. On the contrary let the period of your youth be holy.

II.

To this end you should diligently use the means which God has given you to attain holiness. First of all I mention *work*; for it is an important means of preserving the soul from evil. A young person who labors till he is thoroughly tired is thereby shielded against many temptations. Idleness is a fruitful source of vice. A proverb says, "Every man must carve out his own fortune." And while many hands do indeed help in the matter, our own work is of first and chief importance. God's blessing rests upon labor. He says, "He that will not work shall not eat," and again, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." Consequently, in whatever position or place you may find yourselves, let your motto be, "Work, work." Continue to work, and you will make something of yourselves.

Think of the Scottish lad, a shop-keeper's son, who at

nine years of age was obliged to work in a factory from six o'clock in the morning till eight at night, and who was anxious to obtain an education. How was he to obtain time for it? He knew how to do so. He made use of the time from eight o'clock in the evening till midnight and beyond. His mother, solicitous for his health, often closed his book and sent him to bed. He had to earn his own books. When he received his first week's wages, he gave to his parents what was necessary for his support. With the remainder he purchased a Latin grammar, and in time other books also. While he sat at his weaver's machine, and attended to his mechanical work with his hands, he read and studied in his book, so that at the age of sixteen he was thoroughly versed in his Virgil and Horace. In this way he prepared himself for the university. It was Livingstone, the great African missionary and traveler, whom his countrymen have honored with a grave and a monument in Westminster Abby. His example admonishes you to go and do likewise, and to redeem the time as he did. It has been calculated that the eight years between the ages of 14 and 22 contain 70,080 hours. Subtracting seven hours daily for sleep and the time required for meals, there remain 40,000 hours. How much may not a diligent person accomplish in 40,000 hours.

But do not forget what it is that sanctifies the work. It is prayer. To have prayed aright, means to have done half the work; for he who prays obtains strength from above, and has God for his Helper. One who faithfully prays will not be permitted by God to fall or be overcome. But he who is remiss in praying or ceases his praying entirely, has already fallen, and if he does not speedily arise, he will utterly sink and perish. "Pray without ceasing," God says to you. And in the third commandment He says to all of you, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." If you do this,

not despising God's Word and the preaching of the Gospel, but gladly hearing and learning it, the Sabbath day will sanctify you. What made the patriarch Joseph such a godly young man? What preserved the prophet pure in a youth spent at the royal court amid a thousand perils? What kept Timothy as a young man morally strong and firm? What else but prayer, the Word of God, and the Lord's Day with its divine services. Yes, Sunday is the pearl of all days. Sunday spreads God's blessing over all the days of the week. Therefore do not fail to observe it. Sunday is the fountain from which the living water of heaven wells forth most abundantly,—that water which refreshes and strengthens the faith. If money be lost, something is lost; if honor be lost, much is lost; if faith be lost, all is lost.

In order that you may hold fast your faith, give heed to one of the means of preserving it which God will provide for you. I mean friendship. Youth is the time best adapted for the formation of friendships. Then is the time that lasting friendships are made. But there are good and bad friendships, the latter of which do not deserve to bear this noble name. True freindships are those only which come from God, and which are formed and continued in Him and for Him. Imitate the example of David and Janathan; they loved one another because they both fervently loved God. Or do as that venerable witness of the faith, Christian Henry Zeller did, who thus describes the formation of his youthful freindships: "On June 4, 1801, I said farewell to my four comrads who were especially dear to me. We went together to a neighboring forest. The glory of the setting sun, the solemn stillness, the deep peace that reigned over nature,—all this gave us a feeling of solemnity. We sang a few hymns; and then I sugested that we should in this hour renew our compact of friendship. With deep emotion

I stepped into their midst, gave my hand to each of them, vowed never to depart from the path of virtue, and said: 'I promise you this in God's presence in order that I may be stricken with fear and trembling should I ever come to the verge of vice.' All vowed the same. We embraced one another, and wept aloud. When we looked up, we beheld above us a glorious rainbow. We thought of Noah, and accepted the beautiful sign as a seal of God's approval upon our compact." And God helped them to spend a holy youth.

III.

My dear children: See to it that your youth be holy also. If you live your youthful days in holiness, *i. e.*, if you live by faith in Christ and do all things to His glory, then will you be his true disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. Then you will be neither the servants of men nor the slaves of any sinful passions, but free, joyful and happy children of God; for whom the Son of God shall make free, they shall be free indeed, so that they ever do the will of God with joy.

Again: Youth is the spring-time of life. If the frost kills the blossoms and buds in the spring, can the autumn bring fruit? If on the other hand your youth is holy, because by faith you have become one with Christ, then you are branches on Christ the Vine, and you shall bear fruit. Every branch that beareth fruit, the heavenly husbandman purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. For, says Christ, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Youth is the period of sowing; and the Scriptures declare that as is the sowing, so will the harvest be. He who in his youth sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption in this world and the next. But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. To all

who lead a holy youth, the words of the Lord apply: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." What glorious promises! What transcendent gifts and graces await you, if you spend your youthful days in righteousness and true holiness!

Remember also that godly children are the parents' greatest joy, and the best reward for all the love and sacrifices which they lavished upon their offspring. What a blessing it would be for you, and how happy it would make you, if you were out among strangers, and your father or your mother should declare concerning you: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Such a youth will prepare the way for a quiet and blessed eventide, give unbroken strength to age, and preserve an active mind and a warm heart full of enthusiasm for all that is great and noble. A holy youth leads to the perpetual youth above. For "those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of God," and "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Mount up, then, ye youthful eagles, that contamination may not touch you; direct your flight ever heavenwards, for there is your happy home. Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

"GIVE ME THINE HEART."

Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

In Christ Dearly Beloved Children:

Conditions are somewhat different on this Palm Sunday from what they usually are; for at other times confirmation and spring-time generally come together. It is when the buds and blossoms begin to appear without, that we are in the habit of confirming the catechumens. But this year such is not the case; for the winter has been prolonged beyond its ordinary length, and instead of being covered with verdure the earth is covered with snow. But if we do not have spring out of doors, we turn to you, dear children, for compensation; you must make amends to us for what we miss in nature. Yes, you are to be our spring-time to day; and just as we look with pleasure and satisfaction upon the fresh verdure of the fields, so we now look with much greater pleasure and satisfaction upon you. To-day the whole assembled congregation is in a particular sense of one heart and one soul; for the thoughts and feelings and wishes of all are directed toward you. You hold our hearts. Parents and sponsors, relatives and friends, teachers and pastor, we all love you, and look upon you as the gardener looks upon the flowers which he has planted and watered, nourished and cultivated. If we only could, we would gladly take you in our arms, and with inexpressible joy carry you into heaven. We cannot do that.

But what is impossible with men, is possible with God; for with Him nothing is impossible. He desires to bring you all to heaven, and three thousand years before you were born He gave good advice to that end and showed the way. I invite your attention to His words:

Proverbs 23:26. "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

These words of God, recorded by a great king whose wisdom has become proverbial, tells you three things: 1. What you are. 2. What you should do. 3. What will result from such action.

I.

You are aware that one of the old philosophers set up as the first rule of human conduct that adage: "Know thyself." This is really a word of wisdom; for what can be more neccesary than that a man should have a clear knowledge of himself? If a man does not even know what he is, how can he make anything out of himself? What are you then? To this question there is from the human standpoint a very short, concise and plain answer: you are as yet nothing. For while you have already learned some things, what are they in comparison with what remains to be learned? And if parents and instructors should cease to look after you, your only condition would be well-nigh hopeless. And the matter becomes more serious still when you think of your life up to this point. How much time have you not lost and wasted? how many sighs, and perhaps even tears of parents and teachers accuse you, and admonish you that you not only are nothing, but that you are debtors before God. This cannot be too earnestly impressed upon you; for conceit is apt to manifest itself early; and when young persons are dismissed from school, they are often like wheat when it shoots into the

stalk. For as these stalks jauntily hold their heads up in the air, because these are quite empty, so young persons are fond of holding their heads up high, because there is so little in them. Let me emphasize the fact, then, and make it perfectly clear to you, that as yet you are nothing, nothing at all. If this humiliates you, so much the better; for God giveth grace to the humble.

If you are humble, however, we can safely proceed and regard the matter from another standpoint, from the spiritual side. Then to the question. What are you, there is another answer. It is this: that you, who humanly speaking are nothing, are, spiritually regarded, extraordinarily much; *you are God's sons and daughters.* You became such through holy baptism, as St. Paul writes: "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The baptismal font which stands in your midst is meant to remind you of this fact, and bids you remember that as certainly as you were baptized, you are God's children, branches on Christ the Vine, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Now you have doubtless heard of the old school-master, who, whenever school opened, took off his cap and said to his pupils: "I salute you, ye masters and lords, ye officials and prime ministers; for you may become such some day." With still greater appropriateness we may salute you as great and exalted persons, who are called to fill great positions. For if you are children of God, then there is a paternal home for you above; and if you are branches on the Vine, or brothers and sisters of Christ, He will one day divide with you his heavenly heritage; and if you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, then you are regenerate and elect persons who are to live in holiness and righteousness before God all the days of your life. Remember this, and seek to realize it thoroughly. This truth will not

make you vain or proud; for you know that it is not by your merit but by God's grace, not as a result of your labor but as an unspeakable gift, that you are God's children. O ye youthful Christians! Because ye are baptized, great is your dignity and honor!

II.

Knowing what you are, remember also what you should do. God wants something of you; for He says: "My son, my daughter, give me." What shall you give Him when you have nothing? For children possess no property. Even if you did possess some, he would not desire that. But although you have no earthly gift to give Him, you have what is infinitely more important in His eyes than silver and gold, namely, your heart. Therefore He says: "My son, my daughter, give me *thine heart.*"

I take it for granted that you will not imagine that the heart in itself is something valuable, and that you will not say, as so many in their ignorance say: My heart is good. I believe you have been enlightened sufficiently to realize that the heart, on the contrary, is the worst part of man, because out of it proceed evil thoughts, wicked words, and unrighteous deeds; in a word, out of the heart proceeds sin, as St. Paul says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And yet it is this very heart, corrupt as it is, that God wants for a twofold reason. In the first place He desires to make it a good heart, as He says, "Behold I make all things new." Thus we pray also, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." In the second place He desires to have your heart, because He knows that if He has the heart, He has the whole man. The heart governs man. God could indeed take possession of the

heart by force; who could prevent Him? But what satisfaction would such a possession give Him? Consequently He beseeches us, "My son, my daughter, give Me thine heart; let Me have it as a free gift."

Does it seem reasonable that men should find this a hard thing to do? One would think that all would do this, since it appears so simple a matter; and yet very few of them do it. They bring to God an offering of their time; they devote it to His service. They bring Him an offering of their money and property; they bestow it upon the poor. But they do not give their heart to Him. And why not? Because giving the heart to God means giving up one's self, resigning all, and cutting loose from one's very being. The natural man opposes this to the utmost; for the natural or old man desires to live and rule. But look at the life and rule of the natural man. What is it but being a servant and slave of selfishness, in all manner of lust and desires? For this reason the pious poet Claudius says: "In thee there is a noble slave, to whom you owe his freedom."

Dear children, give freedom to this noble slave in you, that is, to your own self, by giving your whole heart to God and saying: "I will be and remain Thine. I will what Thou willest; I will serve Thee and live for Thee." The moment when one in this way cuts loose from the old man and unites himself to God is the moment in which true freedom is born.

III.

O, that this moment may have come for you all; or that it may come now. Then will follow obedience to the second part of our text, which says, "Let thine eyes observe my ways." And which are these ways? You need not ask or

seek long for an answer, but need only open your eyes and look upon your Lord Jesus. For He has left you an example perfectly adapted for your age, that you should follow His steps. And if you follow Him, you will certainly be observing God's ways. In saying that Christ has left an example adapted for your age, I refer to that period in His life when He stood, as you now stand, on the boundary of the line between childhood and youth. At that time He spoke certain words, the only words of His of which we have any record during the entire period of His childhood, youth and manhood till He was thirty years of age. Those words are: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

If you give your heart to God, will not the heart thus united with Him say of its own accord: "I must also be about my heavenly Father's business? I must do as my dear Saviour, did, of whom the Scriptures declare that it was His custom on the Sabbath-day to go into the synagogue, or as we would say, to church; I must be as my dear Saviour was, who found his joy and delight in God's house, in God's Word, and in communing with God in prayer." O pay heed to the voice of nature. Do you not see how all the plants turn toward the light? And that only in the light do the buds develop into flowers, unfold their beauty, and fill the air with their fragrance? Therefore, my dear children, be ye also such plants, planted by God. You also are like buds. The sun in whose light you are to develop into flowers is here. It shines bright and warm in the Gospel. Therefore seek this light with all diligence, and find your delight in God's Word and in prayer. The Scriptures call such conduct godliness, and tell us that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. As a testimony to the truth of these words, let me quote what one of the noblest men of recent times, the great philosopher

Jacobi, says: "I have been young and have grown old, and I bear witness that I have never found solid, thorough, and permanent morality in any but those who feared God in the old child-like way. Only in their case did I find joy in living, and a hearty triumphant cheerfulness of so remarkable a kind that it is not to be compared with any other."

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Let this be the first way of God in which you follow unwaveringly the footsteps of your Saviour. Such godliness will be your greatest ornament; for if it can be said of you, "This is a godly youth, or a godly maiden," every one will declare that you have the noblest of all attributes. But if it should have to be said: "This young man knows much and is rich and distinguished, " or "This young lady is beautiful and skilled and well-bred,—but they are not godly," then every one will declare that they lack what is best.

A heart united with God will impel you to observe that other way of God, which was exemplified by the Saviour when he went down and was subject unto his parents. Be subject to your parents in the circumstances upon which you will now enter. Learn to obey and serve; then you will one day amount to something. For by obedience and service a great enemy in you will be overcome, namely, your natural wilfulness. Through obedience and service, that which stamps man with his real individuality, namely, his character, is formed. It is true, many persons in these days understand character to mean insisting upon their own way, and yielding nothing. But the Scriptures call such persons unreasonable and unruly. You certainly do not wish to be such. Therefore, whether you be at school, or learning a trade, or in service, or whatever position you may occupy, let your self-will be broken. This may be a bitter medicine for you, but it

will be wholesome; for it will make you wellbred persons, who are not ashamed of any labor or service. And this is a thing of great importance; for labor is the condiment of life, and bread that has been earned tasts the best. Service is life's task; and as long as we dwell on earth we shall have to serve. It is a beautiful and deeply significant custom to give to each new successor to the British throne a ring on which are inscribed the words: Ich diene (I serve). You too are crown princes in the spiritual sense, for you are called to wear a crown which is much more precious and splendid than the crown of Great Britain. You are called to wear the imperishable crown of glory in God's kingdom, in the holy city whose gates are of pearl and whose streets are of gold. That is your goal. Strive for it with all your heart. Who will reach it? I could tell you in the words of Scripture, but I will rather tell it to you in the words of a dear good child that lay very sick. The child was one of those heavenly plants that at an early age was ripe for paradise. At her request her father read for her the last chapters of the book of the Revelation of St. John, which describe the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem. The child listened in silence. The father wondered how much she had understood of what he had read. He was to find out. For scarcely had he concluded, when with an earnest look she said: "O father, what clean feet those persons must have who are permitted to walk in those golden streets!"

Yes, clean feet you must have, and clean hands, and clean eyes, and a clean heart if you would come to the Lord. Therefore follow after holiness, and guard your soul well if you would have eternal life. Let the prayer and vow of your heart, given to God, be: Lord, let me not decrease but increase in knowledge; let me not go backward but forward in the faith; let me not become corrupt, but remain unblemished in body and soul; let me not cling to the earth, but direct

my course to heaven like the young eagles." So be it. Rise, ye young eagles toward heaven, and may God grant you grace to reach your goal. Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

RECEIVING CHRIST AND WALKING IN HIM.

Colassians 2: 6 and 7. As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and bulit up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

My first words to-day are addressed to you, beloved congregation, assembled to witness the confirmation of this year's confirmation class. I present to you these sons and daughters, prepared to observe this important day of their lives. I lay them on your hearts and consciences; give them faithful assistance. They are in need of your supplications at the throne of grace in addition to their own prayers. It is your duty to implore the Lord in their behalf, that He may confirm unto them His covenant of grace, increase within them the gift of His Holy Ghost, and give them power to be called the children of God, and to overcome all ungodliness and worldly lust, all levity and inconsistency, lest they be deprived of the blessings of this day.

As Moses, interceding for Israel against the Amalekites, stood on the summit of the mountain and prayed without ceasing; so you must continue instant in prayer for these children. Especially should you do so on this day. Be a congregation of prayer, calling down from heaven blessings in abundance upon the coming generation. Our Lord Jesus Christ promises: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do!"

My second word is addressed to you, beloved parents and sponsors of our catechumens. I trust that you have accom-

panied your dear children to the sanctuary with eyes dimmed by tears of joy, with hearts full of warmest wishes, with souls radiant with the hope of a blessed future for them. Your eyes have espied your own in this number on the seats of honor; in spirit you are at their side. Why is it that your eyes are fixed upon this one child? Why are all your wishes concentrated on this son, this daughter? Is it not, because is is a possession entrusted to you by God since the day of its birth, and especially put into your charge in Holy Baptism by God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, with the commission to care for it in true love as a child of God, and to bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so that you may restore it to Him safe on His day?

To-day your efforts in behalf of this child culminate in an important event. Your hearts rejoice on this blessed day. But let your love continue. Let your intercession be like the guardian angels, who at all times behold the countenance of God, and who surround and defend those that fear God.

And now I turn to you, my beloved children. I have a good deal to say to you. All that moves my heart is briefly comprehended in the words of St. Paul to the Colossians. You will find them there in the 2nd chapter, verses 6 and 7:

"As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

I. Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord—may I say this of you, as St. Paul says it of the Colossians? Indeed, I *must* be able to say so of you who are assembled for such an important purpose, to receive the rite of confirmation. Once before in your lives, by the grace of God, you passed a high and festive day—it was the day of your baptism. Showers of blessing from above descended upon you; but you did not

realize it. What you were unable to do then, others did in your stead; they made the confession and vow in your name. Parents and sponsors offered you to Christ your Lord on the arms of faith; they prayed for you; they watched over you; they brought you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You have not lacked instruction since then. Many of you have attained to a good knowledge of the way of salvation, and even the less gifted ones among you know that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners; you believe that Christ has become *your* Saviour, that in Him you have the redemption through His blood, namely, the forgiveness of sin. To this you have testified before me and before this congregation in the public examination. All this stands as a testimony that, "ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord.'

And now, as what have you received Him? As your Jesus, Saviour and Mediator, who is the Anointed One of God, who sitteth at the right hand of the Most High. He is your Lord; He is your King. To receive Him by faith means to be subject unto Him as Lord and King, and to surrender yourselves to Him; as we confess: "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord—I believe that he has redeemed me, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death and the power of the devil—in order that I might be his, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, liveth and reigneth to all eternity.

In such faith you have received Christ Jesus the Lord. And

II. *He has received you.* Not only now does He receive you; He received you, when in the unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost He made the eternal covenant of grace with

you in Holy Baptism. Whatever He promises He keeps. What He promised then, He to-day confirms, when you come to enter into a betrothal with Him, when with holy vow and confession of faith, and with the promise of faithfulness, you surrender yourself to Him for life.

He has received you among His redeemed, He has reconciled you with *His* and *your* heavenly Father as His beloved children, He has given you free access to the throne of Grace. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; "for as many of you as have been baptized, have put on Christ." "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry: Abba, Father." You have felt the gracious operations of His Spirit in your inmost soul. During the catechetical instructions you experienced in your own hearts the same feeling to which the two disciples who walked with the risen Saviour to Emmaus testified: "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

He has *received* you; the unmistakable proof of this fact is found in the manner in which He has guided you in the past. He has helped you hitherto, to the steps of the altar, where He, the heavenly King is pleased to-day to accept your tribute; He exhorts you again and again in spite of your many transgressions of His covenant and commandments, in spite of your many faults and sins, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," He assures you, "My covenant of grace is still in force, I will confirm it; for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

If ye, therefore, have received Christ the Lord, as your Saviour, King and Master and if *He* has received *you* among His redeemed to be the children of God—what is it that follows for you, what duties do you take upon yourselves on this confirmation day?

Let me answer:

III. *You solemnly declare your willingness to serve Him faithfully all the days of your lives.*

The apostle writes: "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."

1. Ye shall *walk in Him.* You are to live in constant communion with Jesus Christ, as His disciples did when He was visibly among them.

You are about to step over the threshold of childhood and enter into the period of youth. Soon some of you will be called upon to choose a calling in life. Circumstances will remove you from parental restraint, and from the control of school. Oh, let not any desires of your own lead you in making your decisions. Let Christ lead you! Let His word influence you! Never lend your hand to a questionable undertaking! Never let the world and the lust thereof make a decision for you. How many have followed their own devices in utter forgetfulness of the instruction of the church, and have ended in the ruin of body and soul! Be concerned to walk worthily of your high, heavenly calling. Remember that you are pilgrims here on earth, journeying to the city of God! Do you not wish to enjoy a happy pilgrimage? Then keep your Saviour ever at your side, ask Him to be with you always; do whatever pleases Him, so that He may gladly abide with you; avoid that which would displease Him, yea, that which would separate you from Him. To such a walk the present day obligates you.

2. You shall be *rooted and built up in Him,* is the apostolic direction in our text. The former word points downward, the later points upward.

Be *rooted*—this points downward. Like a tree you shall never cease to *send down* your roots deeper and deeper into the holy land of promise and of divine truth. You have learned the word of God; you have studied the Bible History, you have memorized beautiful passages of the Scripture and hymns of our church; you have learned the principal parts of Christian faith and life. Let not your learning be at an end with the close of our instruction. On the contrary, from this day, on which you make a public confession and are received into the communicant membership of the Evangelical Lutheran church, you must liken yourselves unto trees that have been transplanted from the nursery to the orchard in order that they may bring forth much precious fruit. Seek to penetrate deeper into the Word of God, occupy your minds with it, employ all diligence to become trees of righteousness. Remember the words of the Psalmist concerning the righteous, which you have studied and memorized: "He shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper."

Strive to become trees which strike their roots deeper and deeper, and with every new year of grace bring forth more luscious fruit.

Furthermore, you are to be *built up in Him.* Your Lord and heavenly King, to whom you betroth yourselves to-day, is a Rock. Upon this living Rock, this Cornerstone, the Church is built; upon Him you are to be built as living stones, a spiritual house, a temple of the Lord.

Remember you must be living stones, live members of the Church. For what would it profit you to be a dead member? What would it profit the Church of Christ, to have many *dead* members? Some worthless stones would render the building shaky and unsafe, even though the corner-stone itself be the Rock of Ages.

Therefore, beloved Catechumens, be living members of your dear Evangelical Lutheran Church which to-day receives you among her confessors. Love her as your spiritual mother, who has given you birth, who has regenerated you, who has faithfully nourished you with the undulterated milk of the pure doctrine. Attend her services with regularity and punctuality, unite with all the believers in her holy prayers, celebrate her festival days with gladness and gratitude, remain close to the altar of the Lord, where the voice of thanksgiving is heard, where His body and blood are dispensed, and where all His "wondrous works are declared." Unite your voice with that of the Psalmist: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth."

And thus St. Paul continues his exhortation:—

3. Be—*"stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught."* —A wavering faith is *no* faith; the prayers of the doubting heart are not heard; they are like the ocean-waves, which are driven hither and thither by divers winds. Be not found among those who doubt and give way, but among those who are constant. To-day you are standing on the right foundation, you will make a glad and good confession. But in making this vow you assume the duty to *remain* in the faith, to continue in the apostles' doctrine as you have been taught. Let me predict: your faith will be tried, severely tried at

some future time. The false wisdom of our days will try it, mock-wisdom, which believes neither in the crucified Son of God, nor in the risen Lord of Glory, neither in the Son of Man, exalted at the right hand of God, nor in heaven or hell,—it will be on hand to try the faith delivered to you.

All the more, therefore, are you in need of a will strengthened by the power of the Holy Ghost. You must pray for grace to vow in the strength, and in the name of Christ, that you will be *stablished in the faith as you have been taught*.. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

4. *"Abounding therein with thanksgiving,'* thus the apostle closes. You have all received much love and grace at the hands of God and man. God has been your daily benefactor, gracious and merciful, patient and longsuffering in spite of your transgressions and sins. Much care has been spent on you; Jesus has shed his blood for you; your parents, teachers, and pastor have employed pains and all diligence. Much patience, love and faithfulness have been invested; many of you have been children of care—ah, who will count the paryers, offered in your behalf!

It therefore devolves upon you to abound "therein," *i. e.*, in faith, with thanksgiving for all these things. Endeavor to be godly, believeing Christians. You will be like the fertile land. The more diligence there is employed in its culti-

vation, the more fruit is harvested. Become fruitful land which bears a precious harvest, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

Pious, diligent, obedient children are the joy and pride of their parents. The latter are doubly thankful for such gifts of God.

All the godly, yea the angels of God, even the Lord himself, rejoice to see believers who adorn their work with daily repentance and true faith. Jesus Christ on His day will greet those who have remained faithfully "rooted and built up in Him" with the words: "Come, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now may the Lord Himself strengthen your hearts for your holy vows and promises; may He confirm you in your baptismal covenant, and increase in you richly the gift of the Holy Ghost. And He, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen!

R. Neumann.

THEY THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Amen.

Dear Children:

In the last thirty-four years 1796 young Christians were confirmed in this sacred place. What a throng that is! What has become of them? Many have been living since then as true disciples of Jesus, and have given proof of their faith by a godly life; they shine as lights in the congregation. Many have died; for even to the young death often comes speedily; so that today they are well, but tomorrow are dead. Some have gone to destruction through sin. Two have turned Roman Catholic. For the sake of filthy lucre they have broken their confirmation vow and sold their souls. The majority of them are living with the world, in spite of the fact that they know that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." How will it be in your case, dear children? Who can fortell? Who can look into the future? But while we cannot do that, we hope that none of you will bring disgrace upon your calling. In order that this hope may be realized, I desire to impress upon you, whom I dearly love and who have been good catechumens, an exhortation of God's Word:

Proverbs 8:17. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

Beloved children. If you refer to this passage in your Bibles, you will find that it is wisdom that speaks these words. It is wisdom as personified in the Son of God that is meant. It is therefore your Saviour, Jesus Christ, who speaks to you in these beautiful words. Let us consider:

"Those that seek me early shall find me."

We shall speak, 1. Of Seeking; and 2. Of Finding.

I.

There is a German hymn which begins with the words, "Soul, why weariest thou thyself with things of earth." Each verse concludes with the refrain: "Seek thou Jesus and His Light alone; All things else will help thee none." Remember this truth, my dear catechumens. You, too, will now begin to seek something; for Gor has placed in the human heart a desire to move forward and attain something. Work and strive with all diligence and zeal, especially in the days of your youth. From the fourteenth to the twenty-second year of life there are 70,800 hours. Subtracting seven hours a day for sleep, and the time required for meals, there remain 40,000 hours. What cannot a diligent person accomplish in 40,000 hours, if he employs them properly! Therefore redeem the time. But if, as the saying is, you make your fortune in the world, be careful that the Lord be not obliged to inscribe upon it, "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?" And if you gain money, you have, as the proverb says, simply gained *something.* Be it ever so much, it is only "something"; and when you come to die, all your mammon will not help you. You will not be able to take a single cent with you into enternity.

Honor is worth more. In saying this, I am thinking of a particular kind of honor, namely, the honor of youths and

maidens. How precious this is, and how much depends on it, is shown by the proverb which declares, "When honor is lost, it is lost forever." The taint that is left upon this honor can never be removed. O it must be terrible, when a girl comes home disgraced, or when a son comes back from among strangers with his conscience seared by the guilt of seduction! My dear children, watch over this treasure; for to retain your honor and to gain honor before men means much.

But honor does not give us salvation. Faith, however, does. Therefore we say, "Faith won, everything won." For he who has faith has the Lord Jesus Christ, and with Him heaven, life, salvation, and all things. Consequently I have no more fervent wish for you than this, that you may attain such a genuine, true and heart-felt faith as that possessed by the plain wood-cutter, who to the mocking question of the forester, "What do you, a simpleton, know about faith?" immediately replied, "Mr. Forester, I cannot talk much about it, and I do not possess much learning; but this I know, that if you were to place your rifle at my breast and say, 'Give up your life or your faith,' I would say cheerfully and without hesitation, "Shoot, I will not give up my faith in Christ, for it has made me inexpressibly glad and blessed."

Such a faith I wish you. Therefore "Seek Jesus and His Light alone, All things else will help you none." Say this to yourselves, not eight times as the hymn does, but a hundred and a thousand times; and not only say it, but do it. The Lord says, "Those that seek me early shall find me." Mark well the word "early." It refers to your period of life. In youth it is easier to find the Saviour than in old age; for young trees may still be bent and straightened, while with old trees this is impossible for men. See, your hearts are not like the hardened ground by the wayside; for there have not yet so many sins trodden it with their heavy feet as in the

case of older persons. You are like wax, which when cold is hard, but which when warmed a little is so soft that it can be fashioned at will. Moreover, the world has not yet so engrossed you with its cares and business as it has older persons, and the wicked foe has not yet been able to cast so many bands and cords about you. And finally you are still nearer to baptismal grace; and even if, as I fear, you have fallen from it, the Holy Spirit is still nearer to you. Above all, the Lord has promised special help to the young: "He will gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom." So much does He love the young Christians! Therefore, be early in seeking this greatest treasure, Jesus Christ. What you must do has been told you so plainly and distinctly in the catechetical instruction, that I need only to remind you of it. You know that no one can bring himself to faith, but that faith is a gift of God for which we must pray. Ask, and ye shall receive. Again the Lord says: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." Therefore do not let your Bibles lie in a corner, but use them every day. Remember, however, that the principle thing is not simply that you read it, *but how* you read it. In this connection let me tell you the words of a good child of whom I have just heard.

A manufacturer, who had no thought except of gold and gain, came to a business friend, a merchant, who had found a precious pearl. After their business was transacted, the merchant began to talk about the Bible. The manufacturer, however, said, "My friend, I will tell you frankly that I do not concern myself about the Bible, for it it not adapted to us business men; besides, the most of its contents are unintelligible, and I find that one can live without the Bible." The fourteen year old daughter of the house, who had listened to the conversation, asked the guest whether she might lead him

through the garden. On the way she said, "Will you allow me a question?" "Certainly, my child, certainly." "Have you ever read the New Testament through?" Astonished and abashed he had to reply, "No, I have never done so." "I thought so," said the child, "or else you would not have said to father what you did about the Bible." Then she added in an appealing voice, "O, please, please, read the Book, but read it with the desire to understand it."

These words produced a deeper impression upon the guest than the most learned discussion would have done. These words brought him to the Bible, and the Bible brought him to the Saviour. Dear children, do not forget the words of this good child, who also was a catechumen, and read your Bible with the heartfelt prayer that you may understand and believe it. If you thus seek, you will learn to know Him who is the center and core of the Scriptures, Jesus Christ.

But it is also written, "Faith cometh by hearing"; for in the preaching of His Word the Lord Himself speaks to you. I am sure that if a king commanded you to come to him every Sunday, you would go in spite of all the difficulties that might be in the way. When the bells ring on Sunday, then say to yourselves, "My Saviour is calling me; I dare not make Him wait." And if your employer should wish to make you work on Sunday, plead thus with him: "My dear master, my great Master of Nazareth has ordered me to come to church; He wishes to speak to me, that I may become a godly apprentice." Your employer will then say to himself, "The boy is right,' and will let you go. And if you thus come to church faithfully, then as surely as God in heaven lives, the way to church will become the way to salvation, and you will find the Lord Jesus.

II.

To find Jesus,—what does it mean? Think of the old heathen philosopher, who wrestled with a difficult problem day and night, and in his anxiety to solve it forgot to eat or drink or sleep. At last he jubilantly exclaimed, "Eureka," I have found it. Yet after all it was only a principle of science that he had found. Think of Columbus and his companions when, after a thousand anxieties and dangers, they discovered the new world. They fell upon their knees and loudly thanked God for their good fortune. And yet it was only a new portion of the earth that they had found. Think of the bold Arctic explorer Kane, who, seeking a wide sea in the midst of the ice, imagined that he had discovered the polar sea, the goal of his ambition. So great was his joy and excitement that his blood rose to fever heat;—and yet it was only an idea, and a false one at that. But what will it be when you find Jesus, the Light of the world, the incarnate Love of God, Jesus, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, Jesus, the deliverer from all fetters; Jesus, who holds unfading crowns and palms of victory in His hand, and will divide his entire divine heritage with His own dear children, what will it be when you have found Him!

In order that you may realize how much depends upon finding or not finding Jesus, let me describe the life history of two young persons. One of them accepts the principle of the worldly, "Youth and virtue will not go together," and "The young must sow their wild oats." He goes forward on the broad way, through thick and thin; for he thinks that to live gaily is to live the best, and to use one's freedom is to enjoy one's existence. But he forgets that he who commits sin is the servant of sin; that every sin makes a wound and

disfigures the inward man; that every sin leaves a stain which all the water in the world cannot wash away; that every sin creates a debt concerning which the command before God is: "Pay," and to all eternity, "Pay." He fails to observe what evil spirits enter into the heart with sin: a disinclination to prayer and an aversion to God's Word and to spiritual things. He fails to observe that he becomes more and more estranged from God and Christ, and that, having lost the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he staggers through life like a ship that has lost its course and is tossed to and fro on the stormy sea without compass or rudder.

If, in the most favorable case, such a person in later life learns to believe, how poor he is in eternal possessions, how dreadfully disfigured in the inward man by sin; and what a sorrowful recollection is his of a misspent life! Though the wounds of sin heal, yet the scars will remain and continue to pain, especially when danger and affliction come; for the conscience says: "These are the chastisement for thy foolish life." And though such a person be converted at last, how many weak spots will there not be in him where Satan may seize him to draw him back into his former sin! What conflicts must he not endure with his evil lusts and desires, grown great and powerful by his life of carnal indulgence! What temptations will not beset him in the form of evil thoughts and recollections of past sins, which follow him step by step! And what a terrible conflict will there not be on the bed of death, when Satan makes his last assault on the soul, brings back the recollection of all the sins committed, and cries out to him, "Thou canst not stand before God; for behold how thou art disfigured in body and soul. Thou art too filthy for heaven; and how many are there not whom thou hast destroyed by thy words and deeds, and who will now accuse thee before God. Thou art too guilty, thou canst

not find acceptance." O how such a man will then have to writhe and wrestle and fight. Amid what terrors and anxiety will he not have to believe and pray, that he may be barely snatched from the destroying anger of God like a brand from the burning. Such is the description of one who found Jesus late, because he did not seek Him early.

Now let us look at another who found the Lord in his youth, because he sought Him early. How blessed he is. Led by the Good Shepherd, and filled with the Holy Spirit, he joyfully journeys upon God's paths. Preserved from gross sins, he has many thousands less temptations. He is chaste and pure in mind and conduct; and if temptation comes, he is able to pray, and has a good shield and weapon in God's Word. Delighting in God's Word and reading it diligently, he grows in knowledge and faith, and gathers eternal treasures. He has ever increasing peace with God, and blessed and intimate communion with his Saviour. Walking in the Spirit, he becomes more and more spiritual and heavenly in mind; and since Christ is formed in him more and more, he gives proof that he is a salt of the earth, and shines as a light in the world by his confession in word and deed. He who so early becomes a good tree, will through all his life bear much fruit to the glory of God and to the edification of his fellow-men. A godly youth will prepare the way for a blessed eventide of life, and will preserve to age an unbroken strength, an active mind, and a warm heart for all that is great and glorious. A holy youth will lead to the eternal youth above, when the angels shall carry the rich, full and ripe sheaves into Christ's arms. When a soul from the very morning of life on has fought a good fight, has kept the faith, and has finished its course, who can describe the joy that shall belong to such a soul when with its own eyes it sees Him whom it has loved from its youth, in

whose footsteps it has followed, and whom it has served through all its life! Such is the history of the second person mentioned above.

My dear children. Which of the two persons will you take as your example? "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life." Vow to God in this hour, "We will seek Jesus and His Light alone; All things else will help us none." Let each of you say from the heart: "For Jesus will I live; His will I be; to Him I will cling forever." Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

SEEKING THE HEAVENLY CITY.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Dear Children:

The day of confirmation has come. Your course of catechetical instruction is completed. I may say that in a certain sense I almost regret it, for I would gladly have kept you around me. The hours were pleasant and delightful. They were a real heart-felt joy to me. I have experienced much satisfaction with you. There are, indeed, many weak ones among you. These I would encourage to-day with the reflection, that weak catechumens frequently become very good Christians, because they faithfully apply in their lives the little which they have apprehended in faith. The Lord says, "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." And where He finds such faithfulness, He fulfills His promise, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." Therefore, ye weak ones, be of good courage, for you have a merciful and patient Lord, who says to you: "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." To the others, however, who have greater gifts, and therefore have been able to gather great treasures of knowledge, I say: Be not proud or conceited; for it is written, "To whom much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

There has been an extraordinary touching preparation for this confirmation in the fact that a week ago one of your number received the sacrament of Holy Baptism. It seems to me that a great blessing has flowed from that beautiful baptismal service. The house of God was full as on a high festival. A solemn stillness reigned over the assembly. A spirit of deep devotion was manifest in the congregation, and especially in you.

How could it have been otherwise; for at that uplifting service you were made to realize thoroughly what you once became through this sacrament, and what transcendent and rich graces and gifts were bestowed upon you in baptism. It seems to me that you must have asked yourselves, "Am I still a good, upright child of God; have I brought forth fruit as a living branch on Christ the Vine? Am I still a temple of God, so that the Holy Spirit dwells within me, impels me to pray and to go to God's house, and holds my thoughts, words and deeds in control?" Well for you if you were able honestly and truly to answer "Yes" to these questions. But always keep in mind the words of the great apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." If, however, you must answer "No" to those questions, that is, indeed, bad; for then you have fallen from baptismal grace, and stand in danger of losing your salvation. But you are not yet lost; for God calls to you, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you;" "look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth."

And all of you, forget not, that if you were not baptized, you could not be confirmed to-day, could not come to God in confession, and would have no share in or right to the table of the Lord. Holy Baptism is the fountain out of which all

the blessings of salvation flow to you; for in baptism God has made with you a covenant of grace with which you should comfort yourselves when you go out into the world. In going forth, take a passage from God's Word with you on your way:

Hebrews 13:14. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

On the basis of these words, let us consider three questions: 1. Whither are you going? 2. What dangers threaten you on the way? 3. How can you overcome them?

I.

Beloved children. Here we have no continuing city. This will prove to be true of the majority of you in the literal sense of the words; for you will move away from here. If you were asked, whither are you going, some would reply, "We are going away to school." Bear in mind that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Others would reply, "We are going into service." Rejoice that the Son of God came into the world, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Make your service a service of God; in serving your masters, serve the Lord. Still others would say, "We are going to learn a trade." Remember that only diligent and faithful apprentices can become skilful masters.

Before you leave the parental roof reflect upon what father and mother, or those who have supplied their place, have done for you. Embrace them, and thank them once more from the bottom of your heart, and beseech them on your knees to grant you their blessing; for the blessing of parents builds houses for the children. And in saying farewell, do not forget your old pastor, who loves you all as his own children. He desires, before you go away, to lay his

hand once more in blessing on your head, to look once more in the eyes, and to speak a parting word of admonition to your hearts. Then go your way with good courage; for whether you go off to school or into service, or into your apprenticeship, these are all ways which please God. Yet after all their are only ways on which, or rather way-stations at which you remain for a short time. Then you proceed farther; the apprentices become journeymen, the journeymen masters, the servants heads of families, the pupils students, etc.

All these intermediate stations are, indeed, important; and therefore as long as you tarry at them, you are to do your duty diligently. But much more important than these intermediate stations is the final station. It is a city, but such a one as this earth does not contain. Toward it trains depart every day and every hour. They carry all four classes of coaches, but the first two classes are generally less fully occupied than the third class; and the majority of the passengers are usually found in the fourth class coaches. Have you not already guessed that this final station is the city with the golden streets, the Jerusalem above? There the Lord is waiting for you with palms and crowns, and He has prepared for all of you there a habitation of peace. There the noblest and best who have ever lived upon earth are waiting for you, a holy congregation, worshipping in the very presence of the Lord. Fix your eyes upon the goal. Thither let your aspirations and efforts be directed throughout your life. For if you met with ever so good fortune and prosperity at all the other stations, and became ever so famous, would not your whole life after all be lost if you were not permitted to enter this holy city? Therefore if you are asked to-day, "Whither are you going?" may God grant

you grace to say with one accord, "We are journeying to the heavenly Jerusalem; for we all desire salvation."

My dear children: If you say from the heart, "We desire salvation," this is a good beginning; for the proverb says, "Where there is a will, there is a way." But of course the way to this goal is not easy. If you cannot ascend to the summit of a mountain without much toil and exertion, you may well understand that the way to the heavenly city cannot be an easy and jolly pleasure-trip. The way is steep; it is narrow and little trodden, as Christ says: "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But the worst of it all is, that no way in the world is so beset with perils as the way which leads to the Jerusalem above. For on the right hand and the left thieves and robbers lie in wait. Alas, how many thousands upon thousands have begun traveling upon this holy road, and have fared in a spiritual sense like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. They wounded him, stripped him of his raiment, and left him lie half-dead. Make up your minds, therefore, that you cannot get through life without being attacked. Above all, these foes will seek to rob you of your best treasure, your faith. O, do not let them deprive you of it; for it is true: "If money is lost, something is lost; if honor is lost, much is lost; if faith is lost, all is lost."

I will direct your attention to another danger. Young people desire to advance in the world. This is a desire which God has implanted in the heart; and he who in his youth does not endeavor to advance, and does not ever aim at something higher, is a miserable person and will remain one. But know that the way to every higher stage in life is the way of service and obedience, as the Scriptures declare: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." But

this does not usually suit young persons. When they have left school, they often imagine that they already are somebody, and they imagine that to serve and obey would take a pearl out of their crown. O dear children, remember that no pearl can fall out of your crown, because as yet you have no crown, but must first acquire one. The way to do so is to be humble, and ever to say, "What I know and am able to do is as nothing in comparison with what I have yet to learn." Beware of conceit and vanity as of a venomous serpent; for it is written, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

The third danger which threatens youth on the way of life comes from the desire for enjoyment. Man desires happiness, and is not created for sorrow. If any age of life dare make claim to joyfulness it is youth. Young men and young women should be cheerful and happy; and if they are not, they either are physically sick and need a physician, or they are spiritually sick of a bad conscience, and need repentance and conversion. Therefore rejoice, O young man and young woman, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment; for there are innocent and guilty pleasures. Avoid the latter with the greatest care, and beware of the pleasures of the world which look attractive but which bring ruin in their train. How often do not young men of every station disgrace their youth or get into debt by gambling and drink, resort to theft or fraud, and bring unspeakable grief upon their poor parents. How often do they not fall into the filthy sin of secret or open unchastity, and inflict upon their souls wounds whose painful scars remain throughout life. Again how often is there not a complete change in young women, who loved the Lord, but who, from the moment when they entered society and followed its

ways, turned their back upon the Lord and His house and gave their heart to the world and its lusts. You see therefore, my beloved children, that the dangers which threaten you are great and serious. I tell you this to warn you.

III.

Now I will show you how you may overcome. Listen: The old heathen had many fables with a deep meaning. Thus they told of a great castle filled with a rich treasure which was guarded by a great dragon. Whoever failed to overcome the dragon, failed to win the treasure. The castle was so full of passages intersecting one another, that all the heroes who entered lost themselves, and perished miserably because they could not find their way out. One, however, by name of Theseus, took a large ball of thread with him, fastened it at the door, unraveled it as he went, reached the dragon, and having conquered him, found his way out of the labyrinth again by means of his thread, and brought the treasure with him.

My dear children, imitate this hero when you go forth into the labyrinth of the world to fight with the dragon, *i. e.,* with the dangers which beset youth, and desire to come forth without injury to your soul. Take with you that holy ball of thread which God Himself has spun for you, *i. e.,* His precious, holy Word. As long as you do not let this heavenly thread slip from your hands you will travel through all the ways of the world safe and pure; for it is written: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

Again, do not lose your pass-port, *i. e.,* prayer. It is called thus with justice; for Christ says: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Use this pass-port diligently and daily.

Take as your model a young man of whom I have just read. It was at the edge of a forest of fir-trees, at some distance from the road. A young apprentice sat there on the moss in the eventide. His knapsack was open, and while the evening sun shone on his golden locks, he was reading half aloud the 111 Psalm, for he thought he was quite alone. When the one who narrated the incident drew near, the young man glanced upward, and the narrator found himself looking into a pair of bright blue eyes. Dear children, will you also be found thus each day in your closet with the Bible in your hand, or with your hands folded in prayer, with an upright believing heart? If so, your face also will shine with the peace of God, and your eyes will be a clear mirror of a heart which by prayer has preserved its innocence.

Finally, never travel incognito, as princes sometimes do, concealing their high rank in order not to be burdened with demonstrative receptions. In their case, traveling incognito is based upon a good reason, and there is nothing wrong in their doing so. But you are never to travel incognito in your journey to the heavenly city, *i. e.*, you are never to deny your high and glorious rank as Christians; but wherever you may be, whether at school, in service, or learning a trade, confess yourselves openly and distinctly as persons who through Christ desire to be saved. This will bring you a threefold blessing. In the first place it will preserve you from the company of wicked persons. In the second place it will win you the respect and esteem of all true Christians. And finally the Lord will then fulfill in you His promise, "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my heavenly Father and His holy angels."

Dear children. Now we are still all together; but from this point our ways part. We are all, however, to come together again on the great day on which Christ will admin-

ister the great and true confirmation, and will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." God grant that none of you may then be missing. Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

LORD TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

Beloved Children:

The day of confirmation has come. The esteem in which it is held is shown by the fact that on Palm Sunday the house of God is frequently fuller than on the high festivals. But, my children, do you understand the meaning and significance of this day? We have reason to ask this question; for many persons have altogether wrong ideas concerning it, which need to be corrected. Above all, beloved, the day of confirmation is not a parade-day, not an exhibition at which the children are to show off their pretty clothes and ornaments. O how often parents make a mistake. The external appearance of their children is their chief concern; their internal preparation a side matter. What wonder is it that children regard matters in the same light? A silken sash or a golden trinket often occupies their attention more than spiritual things; and many a boy, in his admiration of the watch which he has received as a confirmation gift, forgets his Saviour. O, dear parents, have you fervently prayed for your children, that they may be festively adorned within? That is a thousand times more important than that you should dress and adorn them beautifully without. And you, dear children, do not let your eyes wander up and down over your new clothes nor let your mind be occupied with your presents; for you have to do not with men, but with God, and God looketh not on the outward apearance but on the

heart. It is the heart that counts; for you are to confess your faith. And what will such a confession avail you if it does not come from the heart? Have you marked well my words?

Again, confirmation is not a sacrament, and in it the Holy Spirit is not given to the young Christians by the laying on of hands; for the church has not plenipotentiary authority to bestow the Holy Spirit. The pastor will, indeed, lay his hand upon each of you, but only as an outward sign and with the prayer that God may confirm and increase in you the gift of the Holy Ghost for the sake of His dear Son Jesus Christ, that by His power you may live as true children of God. And if the congregaton joins from the heart in this prayer, and if you, dear children, open your hearts when the hands are laid upon you and prayer is made, then all will be Yea and Amen, and the Holy Ghost will come to you. O, I know of some who at their confirmation were so blessed that they seemed to be exalted to heaven. May something of that holy experience be yours. That would be a glorious beginning, from which much might be hoped for your godly continuance in after life.

Let us proceed. The day of confirmation is, indeed, a great day; but it is followed by two other days, the day of confession, and the day of communion. These are much more important and glorious. For with confirmation you only enter the outer court, while in confession you enter the holy place, and in the communion you enter the Holy of Holies. Confirmation gives you the right to both of these latter. To-day I am to tell you in the name of the Lord to come in humility and repentance to Him who receives sinners and forgives their transgressions. To-day I am to invite you in the name of the Lord to the highest act of worship which there is for Christians on earth, to invite you to come as

God's guests to his table of grace, at which His words will be realized in you, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and dwelleth in me and I in him," provided you come with that true heartfelt faith on which a blessed participation in the Lord's Supper depends. Dear children, how much that is greater and more glorious awaits you! The day of confirmation opens the door for you, and therein lies its importance.

Finally, with this day your childhood days end, and you enter a new school which is harder than the old one from which you have been dismissed; for it is the great and serious schol of life. As you enter it you are to take with you a Word of God. Hear it:

John 6:66-69. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Dearly beloved: We have heard in the Gospel for Palm-Sunday which we read a while ago, how the Lord entered into Jerusalem amid multitudes who accompanied him with palm branches in their hands and hosannas on their lips. But how soon all this was changed. Only five days later the Saviour was forsaken, and the hosanna was followed by "Crucify Him." How inexpressibly this must have grieved the Lord! At a previous time he had experienced the same grief; for our text declares, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Dear children, we, too, have to-day come up into our Zion, and the Lord was in our midst. Love strewed the way with green branches. You came two by two, a long procession. And when so solemnly you entered the house of God where your

relatives were gathered, their hearts were moved with a thousand thoughts and emotions.

But still another heart was moved,—the heart of Him who to-day for the second time sees His word fulfilled as it was fulfilled the first time at your baptism, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

And I, my dear children, as I led the procession, thought how long the procession would be if the 2,000 Christians whom I have led during the past thirty-seven years had all come together. Where have they remained? What has become of them? The majority of them are themselves already fathers and mothers, and to-day their children are being confirmed. Many of them glorify God by an honest, upright Christian life. But alas, how many also have gone back and have broken their confirmation vow, because they imagined that confirmation was not a being led into the Church but into the world; and now they live on from day to day without the Saviour. If this fact fills the heart of the pastor with sorrow and grief, how must it be with the heart of the dear Saviour.

Therefore He turns to you today and asks, "Will ye also go away?" Beloved children, mark well from the words "*Will* ye also go away," that you are not forced. You are at liberty to follow the path your heart chooses. Hitherto you have been led by the will of your parents and teachers; but now the most of you will go forth into the world. A few will go away to school. To them I give as their motto the words: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Others will enter service. To them, in remembrance of what I have told you in the catechetical instruction, I say, "Seek a good place for service, *i. e.*, a place where you may be able to go regularly to church." Others will learn a trade. Let them think of the

words of the Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." All these ways are God's ways; for you enter upon them at His command and in accordance with his ordinance. And when you, dear mothers, pack the trunks for your children, do not forget to put a Bible in them. And when you do so, pray with your children, and say to them, "My son, my daughter, do not deny the Saviour, and do not disgrace us nor bring our gray hairs in sorrow to the grave." And finally lay your hands upon their heads and bless them, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Then let them depart in God's name.

But you, my beoved children, stand at the parting of the ways; for you can go with the Lord or without Him. One road leads to the right, the other to the left. The road to the left is very broad, as broad as the world. On this you may walk with ease and pleasure. It is full of mirth and merriment, and the enjoyments of life are drunk in copious drafts. On this road the Prodigal Son traveled till he reached the husks which the swine ate. Note well, dear children; whoever travels on this road is rewarded with husks. To travel on it means at last a polluted body, a contaminated soul, an evil conscience, an immense debt of which an account must be given to God, bitter tears of parents, and inexpressible grief for your Saviour, who then must say, "I have loved thee unto death, and dost thou thus repay my love and goodness?" Millions have traveled this road. The Lord asks you, "Will ye also go away?" No. No, No, you declare today, and you say with the apostle, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Yes, of this I am convinced; you are all sure that Jesus is the Christ for whom the human race waited 4,000 years, the Saviour of the world, the Son of the living God. But do you also *believe* it? I will tell you of one who had such a faith. It is only recently that I read the account of him. And I at once determined that I would tell it to you at your confirmation.

In the year 1815, when the Allies had for the second time taken Paris, a Russian colonel on his return to Russia was quartered with a German minister. The officer, who was a friendly and amiable man, carried on his breast a number of glittering decorations, showing that he had a share in the winning of many victories. But more beautiful than these orders were his faithful blue eyes, with which he spoke more than with his mouth. When he had thoroughly rested and felt comfortable in the house in which he was a guest, he called his host to his room, opened his trunk, and took out of it a beautiful little chest. In it lay a book, bound in blue velvet and expensively decorated with silver trimmings. He opened it, and in his broken German he said, "This is the Bible which I read every day." His eyes shone as if they were saying, "This is the source of my comfort and peace." When the two were together in the evening, the host sat down to the piano and played whatever tunes came into his head. After a while the colonel said, "Play like the people do when they play in church." He meant that the pastor should play a choral; and the latter began to do so. The colonel went into a neighboring room, leaving the door open so that he could hear; and the pastor continued to play. When the choral was ended, and everything was quiet in the adjoining room, the host looked in, and behold the soldier was upon his knees with his hands folded before his face, and praying. The pastor's soul was filled with holy awe.

He returned to the piano and began to sing the hymn, "Abide with us, our Saviour, Nor let Thy mercy cease." When the hymn was ended the colonel came in, embraced his host, kissed him, and said, "I thank you. Jesus Christ be with you." He took the minister by the hand, looked upon him with moist eyes, and said: "God bless you, God bless you." Then they both said good night. But it was long before the pastor fell asleep.

See, the godly soldier not only knew that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and that He alone has the words of eternal life; but he also believed it. Therefore he always carried the Gospel with him, refreshed himself with it, and prayed. Truly what he had in his heart was infinitely more precious and glorious than the glittering orders which he wore upon his breast. O that you also might learn thus to believe. Such a living faith is God's gift, and must be prayed for. Have you prayed for this precious gift? If you do, how quickly the Lord will bestow it upon you! for what does He desire more than that He may make you real, true Christians, *i. e.*, that He may plant living faith in your hearts.

Dear children, the Lord Jesus is the true Guide. If you do not have Him in your heart, you are like ships without a compass on the stormy ocean. Can it be wondered at that such ships should run aground in the shallows or be dashed to pieces on the reefs. But if you have Him in your heart, then your ship of life is like that of the disciples on the sea of Galilee. Though a great tempest arose and the disciples trembled, no harm could come to them, for they had Jesus with them in the ship. He arose and commanded the wind and the waves, and behold, there was a great calm, and the disciples reached the land in safety. You also must go forth into the storms of life. No one can escape them. But if you are able to say in faith: "Jesus is mine, and I am His," He

will uphold you with His powerful hand and not permit you to sink; and though you should stumble, He will lift you up and say to you: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Yes, if you have chosen Jesus as your Guide, you will say:

"Jesus still lead on, Till our rest be won!
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand to our Fatherland."

To our Fatherland! Dear children, how different from one another's will your course of life be, and what a various future awaits you! But whether you reach eminence or remain in humble, lowly circumstances; whether your life be long or short; whether your way be light or burdensome;— no matter, if only at last you reach the true home above with the Lord, and we are there re-united with one another. That is our goal. Keep it firmly before your eyes.

In a certain congregation a catechumen was very sick. He lay upon his bed suffering severe pain. The physicians had given him up, and any one who looked at him could see that his days were numbered. He had to receive his catechetical instruction while he lay in his bed. The pain was often intolerable, but in spite of it he learned his lessons faithfully and conscientiously. He listened most attentively to the pastor, and when the latter departed, he looked after him with such longing eyes that the pastor returned to speak with the sick boy still longer concerning the one thing needful. Thus the instruction was finished, and the sick boy ratified his baptismal covenant; slowly, with devotion, and solemnly he confessed his faith, and was confirmed with the laying on of hands and the benediction. Then all was still. The strength of the sick child was exhausted. Those who were present prayed silently; only the candles which stood on the

table beside the crucifix sputtered slightly. After a while the boy nodded. A hymn was sung, and the communion service was begun as in church. All kneeled and partook of the Lord's body and blood with the sick boy. Then suddenly the boy, who for weeks had not been able to sit up, raised himself alone and with a loud voice said: "I have eaten Jesus' flesh and drunk His blood; now He cannot forget me; I shall remain in Him and He in me. My God, for Jesus' sake I pray Thy peace may bless my dying day." Every eye was dimmed with tears; but for all who looked upon the boy's transfigured face as he fell back among the pillows, the tears were tears of thanksgiving. The following night, while his brother watched by his bed-side and read hymns for his consolation, the boy said: "Now I must adorn myself. Wash my face and my hands and put clean clothes on me; for the Saviour will soon come for me." And so it was. The parents and brothers and sisters were awakened, and came hurriedly. The sick boy slept softly and quietly; and behold the angels of God came and carried the soul home to the arms of God. This incident has touched your hearts, has it not, dear children? O may your confirmation and communion be with the same faith and in the same sense as in the case of that blessed catechumen. Then you will be as blessed as he.

And now "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life," and say with your whole heart: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Amen.

Dr. Ernst Siedel.

THE NIGHT BRINGS OUT THE STARS.

But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. Zechariah 14, 7.

Dear Children of God: There are three days which I, as your pastor, ask you today never to forget. Never forget this, your confirmation day, the day when, before many witnesses, you rightly vow to be faithful to your God and His beloved church till death. Remember this day and keep your vows.

And to keep your solemn vow you will not forget to remember the Lord's day. The third commandment is the only one in which God uses the word, "Remember." It is the one commandment which you are so likely to forget and when you forget it, you will pave the way to break all the other commandments. I speak as a man who left home early in life and worked on the bench and was away from parternal influence long before we are supposed to have our habits fixed, but I want to say to you that your only safety in life is to go to God's house every Lord's day and hear His word and make up your mind that you want to know God's will better and live up to all you hear.

But there is another day you should keep in mind. It is the day for which you pray every day in the Lord's prayer when you ask God to let His kingdom come. You cannot think of the coming of His kingdom without at the same time thinking of the coming of the King. In the ninth verse of this chapter we read: "And the Lord shall be King over all the

earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." In this chapter the prophet sees not only the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the second coming, and Oh! what a day that will be! With these three days before you all through life, I now ask you to remember the message I bring to you:

"The night brings out the stars."

"It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."

I. *This is true of the night of nature.* Where are the stars today? They seem to have left the heavens, but they have not. If it should ever be your privilege to do down into a very deep well, or hole, in the ground during the day, just look out of the dark hole into the sky and see the stars. You will never forget the sight. It is going down into the dark that enables you to see the stars at noon. In the evening when the sun sets the stars begin to appear; and when it is full moon the stars seem so small, but go out on a night when there is no sun nor moon in sight and behold the beauty and the size of the stars. The Romans were accustomed to say: *"Per aspera ad astra,"* only another way of saying: "The night brings out the stars.

2. *This is also true of the night of nations.* It was the darkness of the night of the flood which brought out the brightness of the seven colors of the rainbow. It was the dark night of famine which opened Jacob's eyes to behold his lost son Joseph. It was the dark night of the Babylonian captivity which started the star of the East to lead the way to Jerusalem in search of the Light of the World. It was the terrible darkness of the continent of Africa which moved Livingstone to plunge into the heart of that double darkness with the light of the Gospel. It was the night of persecution

which brought our fathers across the sea to the light of this great country of God. It was the black night of slavery which brought out the bright light of Union and Liberty over the dead bodies of 400,000 noble men of the North and South. We are passing through the edge of one of the blackest nights of world history right now and no one seems to know just what it does mean, but all history proves that God will reveal a great light when this terrible and black night shall in the end reveal His plan and show the world some new stars. Even now we can see that everything has utterly failed except true Christianity; and it seems to me I can already see from this dark night in history the coming of the greatest true revival of genuine Christianity the world has ever seen.

3. And this touches already on *the night of the church.* How often the church has had her nights! Let us not be guilty of the popular saying that the Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews some of the great heroes of the church are mentioned and these words were written after the day of Pentecost and all of them were Old Testament heroes. Abraham was as much a member of the church as we are. When Christ said: "On this rock I will build my church," let us not for one minute believe that He said: *I will begin my church.* Because we are building a city is no evidence that the city is not old. Christ will continue to build His Church till the end of the world. Now, I hope you are prepared to understand what I mean when I say that from the beginning of the world the church never grew so fast as it did just after a dark night of her history. It would probably be more correct to say *"during the night* of her history." When the church is popular, then lookout for hyprocrites! In the days of Noah and Daniel and Paul and the 185,000 martyres in the first three centuries of the Christian Era, men did not go into the church to play the hypocrite. Then it was

that the night brought out the stars. All along the path of history the church shines the brightest in the dark night of persecution. It was the Dark Ages that brought out the bright light of the great Lutheran Reformation.

4. Let us turn now *to the night of the home.* It may be that up to this time your home has always been bright. Some of you have come from homes where there have been no great troubles, but mark what I say: Troubles will come into your home. Some day there will be a gloom there you never saw before. In Egypt, it is said, there was one night when there was not a house in which there was not one dead. The death of a Christian is not a very great trouble, but there are troubles coming into your life, if you are worth testing, and when they do come, never forget that it is the night which brings out the stars. Which are the homes and individuals which would miss your pastor the most if he were to leave today? Some might not miss him at all, but some would; and who are they? The ones who have past through the greatest trials and have been in the greatest darkness and have seen the light as never before. Never does the Word of God and His promises and He himself shine so brightly in the hearts of His children as when they are down in the dark valley and get a vision of the Light of the World.

5. What is true of the nature and the nations and the church and the home, *is also true of the individual.* There is no darker hour in all the world than comes to *a convicted sinner.* When God's holy law begins to thunder over a man's soul and he hears nothing but its crash and sees nothing but the lightning's flash, and he cries: What must I do to be saved? Then it is that the night brings out—not the stars, but the Sun of Righteousness, the Son of God, the Light of the world, saying: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Luther knew what the night of con-

viction meant. It was a long night for him. But, oh, what a light when he fully realized that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law! Here again it is the night that brings out the stars. "But it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." The night not only overtakes the convicted sinner, but also *the tempted saint.* I know there are some professed Christians who claim to be so perfect that they cannot be tempted any more, and I never see one of them or hear him speak that I do not wish that he would take his wings and fly away from this world for I am sure he does not belong here. Listen to me class! Just as sure as the devil does not tempt you, you are his and furthermore, if God does not let you be tempted for good it is because you are not worth tempting. Testing a Christian is the devil's big job and God's great compliment. It is right here that I want to warn all of you. Just as sure as you are true Christians today, you must pass the test soon and I know of no better way to show you the path of life than to ask you to read the Word of God daily and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress often. Read that part often where Christian meets Apollyon in the road and wants him to turn back. Does Christian have an easy way to get through? It was the battle of his life. He was almost conquered and almost dead. He had dropped his sword and fallen and Apollyon was lifting up his strong arm to give him the fatal blow when Christian suddenly got hold of the sword of the Spirit and gave him such a blow that he had to lose the victory and Christian saw such a light as he never saw before, "So when the battle was over," Christian said, "I will here give thanks to Him that hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, to HIM THAT DID HELP ME AGAINST APOLLYON!" Tempted saints will have dark nights, and it is then that they must never let go of the Sword of the Spirit,

but give Satan the blow that shall bring out the stars in the night.

Today you are young, but life is short. It will not be long till the *night of old age will come.* This is one of the nights which comes to the individual, if you remain here a little while—just a little while. Today you promise to be faithful until death; that is not long. But here let me bring you a great comfort. There is nothing more beautiful in all the world than an aged saint. Some churches make the fatal mistake to want only a young minister. I am sure that some young ministers are a great blessing to a congregation, but the one who is would be a far greater blessing when he is older. In case of a critical operation, would you want a student to practice on you? Young people read the promises and offer their prayers not yet answered, but the aged saint can point back to promises fulfilled to prayers which have been answered. Aged saints in the evening of life look forward to the day when out of the darkness of the shadow of death they shall see Jesus face to face; and Oh what an hour that will be! It will not be many years till you will say of him who now speaks to you: "He is dead," but it will be a mistake. Nothing do I know more certain than the fact that I shall never die. I say with the Apostle Paul: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Remember: IT IS GAIN! Remember that the gray hairs on every man's head are either a crown of glory, or the crown of a fool. See to it that you all so live and so walk that the evening of your lives shall bring out the beautiful light of the eternal morning.

But I cannot leave this subject without reminding you of the fact that *God has saved you to serve Him.* The responsibility of saving this world for Christ now rests on all the members of His church; or better stated, the responsibility of making the Gospel known rests on all of us. Some will not obey

the Gospel. Some will not see the light of heaven. Christ tells us that some must be cast out where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." They shall be cast out into "outer darkness." You often see along the path of life a danger sign, a warning. Let me in conclusion hold up this warning. There is an outer darkness for those who reject Christ, a darkness which will bring out *the fires of hell* and of *an accusing conscience* and *the memory of the Light of the World.* Do not think for a moment that the Saviour did not know what He was talking about when He spoke of hell as being outer darkness and fire. If the night brings out the stars, why should not the outer darkness bring out the fires of hell? It not only can be, but must be. Never will conscience burn brighter than in the outer darkness of hell. When that last day comes and every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth shall bow down before Him, a time when it will be neither day nor night, a time when all shall see Christ in all His glory, do you suppose that those who have rejected Him when they shall enter the outer darkness shall ever be able to forget the vision of the Light of the World? Never! Never! Never! ! ! In all eternity memory in the night of hell will bring out the light of heaven, and that alone is enough to produce the everlasting fires of hell. Let me speak these last words as a dying man to dying men: *I want you all to be faithful to Jesus Christ your Lord until death that you may receive the crown of eternal life. Amen.*

.. *S. P. Long.*

THE CALL TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

II Thessalonians 2:13-17. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hat loved us and hat given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

Beloved in Christ!—We have assembled this morning for a holy and solemn celebration. These young people, whom God our heavenly Father in His divine mercy has accepted as His children in holy baptism, intend to confess their faith before the Lord and before this congregation, after they have proved that they know the doctrines of our church, as far as this can be expected of them. They intend to promise obedience to the Lord and His holy church; for only the living faith is regarded by God. We all shall lift up praying hands to God over them and implore Him for the gift of His Holy Spirit to protect and defend them against all evil, to strengthen and help them in all good. And being persuaded of a gracious answer, we will then confidently lay hands on them in blessing, in order to assure them that God our Father will surely give unto them His Holy Spirit at all times, provided they give Him room and do not withstand with an evil heart. Finally we shall lead these young Christians to the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have them partake for the first time of the highest grace which our beloved Church affords.

In this earnest and solemn hour I desire to speak a few words reminding you of God's mercy to you, my dear catechumens—of that mercy which you *have* received and *still* receive every day; a word reminding you of God's mercy also as a warning for coming days.

I therefore address you with these words, which the apostle of Christ wrote to the Thessalonians. They are meant for you especially, dear Catechumens, but also for this congregation.

The apostle begins with thanksgiving, and thus reminds the Thessalonians of the grace of which they had been partakers so abundantly. To this he adds well-meant, earnest exhortations and heart-felt benedictions. But the main substance, the center of our text is: *"He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

With these glorious words I shall address you.

1. They should remind you of the great mercy which you have received.

2. They should stimulate you to sincere thanksgiving to God.

3. They should exhort you to true faithfulness.

4. They should animate you to seek the assistance of the Lord in prayer.

"He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." These words should remind you of the mercy which you have received.

In our natural state we are far from God, excluded from His communion. The deep and terrible abyss which separates us from God is "sin." But in parternal love He remembered us according to His mercy. "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He called us who were afar off; He turned His love to us in the

Spirit. We are reconciled to God; the dreadful abyss is filled, sin is washed away by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, His only Son. We have become Christ's own, "obtainers of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," because He has redeemed us, lost and and condemned creatures, secured and delivered us from all sins, from death and the power of the devil. How sublime to be Christ's own, obtainers of His glory! "Glorious," Dr. M. Luther calls this estate so suitably in the German catechism, because through it we are partakers of Christ's glory. His grace has also visited you, beloved children. Through holy baptism you have been called to be obtainers of Christ's glory. Of this we think especially today, because you have now learned to understand the great significance of the holy covenant which God made with you in the days of your childhood through your parents or sponsors. You know now what that apparently insignificant and yet so sublime sacrament means for you, since you are well instructed by the Word of God regarding Holy Baptism. By this word, "by our gospel," as Paul so beautifully remarks, you are called, that ye might not lose this grace which you have received through holy baptism. This you should well remember, not only today, but all the days of your life, that ye are "obtainers of the glory of Christ."

Indeed it is something grand, to be obtainers of the glory of the eternal Son of God! That is why you bear His name and are called Christians after Christ, our Lord. Therefore ye are also partakers of His various graces,—those graces which He secured for you and for the whole world. Therefore ye are rich in everlasting consolation in life and death; for who can lay any charge against those whom Christ has declared His own? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again! Who shall separate us from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress,

or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril? or sword? — I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Consequently ye can be certain of the love of God the Father; for how should He not love those who are obtainers of the glory of His beloved Son? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Therefore ye have a good and blessed hope, for Christ can never leave nor forsake those who are His own! He will give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand.—When I think of this, beloved, I rejoice and am confident, although I well know, how malicious, how dangerous is this world of ours. May the Lord, who has chosen you also to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously guard you against apostasy and disloyalty. It would be too sad, if by your own fault you should lose the great and glorious grace which you have obtained! The only true God make us altogether faithful in the conversation of His grace!

II.

A person who obtains grace and goodness should also be thankful for it. Therefore the gracious calling "to the obtaining of the grace of Christ's glory," should stimulate you to sincere thanksgiving.

The apostle renders thanks for the grace which others, the Thessalonians, have experienced. He says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God *for you.*" How much more reason, therefore, have you yourselves to give thanks for the

grace which you have experienced. But thanks are often forgotten! People do not even give thanks for the bodily, temporal gifts; how much less for the still more precious, spiritual gifts. We have had these gifts from the beginning; and consequently their possession appears so natural and so inherently ours that many do not think of rendering thanks for these proofs of God's mercy. Or has anyone of you given thanks to God with his whole heart for the gift of holy baptism, for the word of life, for the holy communion, for the precious ordinances of the Church, and for all the blessings derived from these?—O let this day be an exhortation and admonition to everybody to give praise and thanks.

Proper thanksgiving, however, dare not consist only of words and songs; by deeds, by our whole life, we are to thank God truly and worthily. Do not forget that you are called to be obtainers of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that you must walk as behooves those who bear so high a rank! As obtainers of the glory of Christ you must follow His steps and be led by His Spirit. "Study to show yourselves approved unto God," guard yourselves that ye may be known as obtainers of the glory of Christ. This will be the most acceptable thanksgiving in the sight of God. In His communion we must live,—He in us and we in Him. To this may our gracious Father help us all.

III.

He called you to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; this thought should exhort you to due faithfulness.

"Therefore *stand fast* and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle," the apostle continues. We should *stand fast* as obtainers of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hold fast the faithful word

which we have been taught. You are taught in the word, you know the holy tradition; in these you are to be faithful, are to cling to them. In these you are to stand fast without wavering. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. Dangers are not lacking, especially in the period of life in which you stand. Let me, therefore, remind you that you must be faithful. Who the enemies of your soul are, you know from your catechism; the devil, the world and your own flesh. These you must withstand with Holy zeal in the true faith. The worst enemy is our own flesh. But the world also, with its cupidity, sensuality, and arrogance, successfully allures and entices young and old.

If you wish to be faithful and to prevail against such enemies, you must at all times hold fast the Word of God; not only on Sundays, but every day it must be a lamp to your feet and a light unto your path. Through this Word you receive the light and strength of the Holy Ghost; and He alone is able to protect and defend you against all evil, to strengthen and help you in all good. In addition to this, do not fail to be found regularly at that table of the Lord, at which you will soon receive the heavenly gifts, inward and spiritual grace. It is there that the Lord Himself will visit you. What could strengthen more in true faithfulness and in Christian life than the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is given unto you. Be ye faithful! "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,"—thus the Lord exhorts you, who are obtainers of His glory.

IV.

Faithful, however, you cannot wholly be, as the catechism intimates, by your own reason and strength; you need help

from above. Therefore you must seek this help from the Lord in prayer.

With a cordial benediction St. Paul closes his words of exhortation. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." In these last two verses the apostle refers to Him from whom we may expect help. What St. Paul here in his words of blessing, desired for the Thessalonians, that we also should ask of our heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed our Jesus, our divine Helper; and God is indeed our Father, your Father. We may, therefore, come before Him and pray for help, that He may comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. Such help we will implore this day from the Lord, and you should unite your prayers with ours. But you must also yourselves unceasingly ask God for help and strength. Your spirit must walk in prayer at all times. Prayer is the breath of the Christian's life; where it is wanting life must wither and die away. Therefore, beloved, continue instant in prayer, and live a life of communion with the Lord, our God and Saviour, who has called you to be obtainers of His glory.

If you thus seek help and strength from the Lord, if you remain in communion with Him as His children, you will in due time experience how wonderful, how glorious it is to be obtainers of the glory of Christ. Then His glory shall be revealed in you. You shall eternally rejoice in the light of His grace, in the beholding of His Majesty, in a complete life-communion with Him. Then also shall we fully experience, how grand, how gracious is the word: "He called you by our gospel

to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Of this experience may God make us all partakers through His mercy in Christ Jesus, Amen.

R. Neumann.

ABIDE IN ME.

John 15:4-6. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

With joy and fear alike I come before you today, beloved in Christ, and among you, dear Catechumens. I come with joy: for it is a great and precious thing to confess before the world that name which is above all other names, to ratify our most holy faith, and to seek and find strength in the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And who would not rejoice over the fact, that as in nature all the trees at this season put forth new branches, so this congregation now adds new communicants and is strengthened by them.

But a certain anxious fear is necessarily intermingled with our joy. What will become of these young people? That is the question which agitates every earnest, thinking soul. What way will they choose, on which of the two paths of which Christ speaks in His Word will they walk? Will they be found on the lonely and narrow way, which leads unto life? Or will they mingle with the masses on the broad way of the godless world, where those who are Christians in name only find their delight?—Where will ye see them on that day on which the royal Shepherd of the sheep will gather all nations before Him?—These are the questions which at this hour make parents and pastors alike solicitous.

The guarantee of a blessed progress and going out after this good and decided going in does not lie in them; the emotions which *now* fill their hearts are but a passing sentiment; the tears, shed in this solemn hour, will soon dry away. Nor are the parents' love and fostering care at any time a security for a sound Christian development of their children; for in spite of these, Absalom, the son of David, and Dina, the daughter of Jacob, had a deep fall, from which there was no rising.

If our joy is to gain a strong hold and our fear to be changed into hope, we must look for a sure bottom-ground, in which to sink our anchor, a firm foundation, upon which to build. Such can be found only in Christ who ever remains as He is, and in God's Word, which is truth, be it in the form of exhortation or warning, be it in the form of doctrine or promise.

It is one of these words, beloved catechumens, that I wish to lay on your hearts in this hour; remember it, ponder it; a word from the lips of the Good Shepherd, whose sheep you are and shall be, and, I hope, wish to be. I refer to the word of our text, addressed originally to the disciples, but now unto you:

Abide in Me!

By this word the Lord of the Church Himself wishes to confirm you, to ratify your baptismal covenant, to establish your confession and vow, to strengthen you for the fight and the race to which you are called. It contains at once good advice, urgent exhortation, cordial request, and blessed consolation.

It implies, however, two pre-suppositions: first, that ye are abiding in Christ now; and secondly, that there is a possibility of your falling from Him and proving unfaithful.

I am sure of the first: *You abide in Christ* as surely as you have been baptized in His name, as truly as it is written: "As many as have been baptized, have put on Christ." In baptism, God the Father has declared you His children and heirs, God the Son has granted unto you the blessed fruit of His death, God the Holy Ghost has begun His work in you, even if you have only now come to realize the meaning of that holy sacrament. You are members of the Body of which Christ is the head, branches of the true Vine, who does not desire to keep His life-sap unto Himself, but is anxious to communicate it to the branches. As truly as you are members of the holy Christian Church, in which the Holy Ghost works through the Word and the Sacraments, so truly are ye not without Christ, not far from your Saviour. And as to your rights and duties in the household of God you have been carefully instructed. The point is now that ye *Abide* in what has been entrusted to you, in what has been offered you; that ye retain the pearl of great price, which is indeed, not only promised but which has been fully given unto you. This is the meaning of Christ's word: *Abide in Me.*

Now in making this urgent request, this earnest admonnition, His love is prompted by no other motive than the fear, THAT YOU MAY FALL FROM HIM in the coming days of your life. Is there no danger of this? You surely know something about your heart; you have undoubtedly to some extent experienced that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Is there no danger that you will rely on your good intentions like Peter, who in spite of these, yea perhaps because of these, thrice denied his Lord and Master, even after he had made the remarkable confession: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." Do you suppose for a minute that the Word of God and the catechism exaggerate in what they tell you about

the Devil, the World and OUR OWN FLESH? You surely have eyes and ears for the dangers which threaten you at the hands of this unholy trinity. We are all the more in peril because our heart is such a fertile ground for weeds. Are you inclined to rest satisfied with a good beginning? Ah! the beginning is good enough, indeed; but it remains a beginning; and better would it be never to have begun, than to begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. Nothing, furthermore, is more dangerous and pernicious, than the idea so easily conceived: *We are ready, we are perfect.* The course has just been entered, the battle, to which you have been arrayed, is in its primary stage! and in the battle, a hesitating, half-hearted Christian disposition will not avail. As truly as Christ Himself suffered in the battle, and His sweat became as blood; as truly as it is written that without holiness no one shall see the Lord; so truly you are called to wage an earnest warfare. If you are earnest about belonging to the rank and file of the soldiers of the cross, the old angry foe will surely be on hand to question the truth of the divine word. He will tempt you to doubt the necessity of being a consistent fighter every day of your life; and right at this stage of your life he will not cease attempting to tear out the tender plant of faith, which is just starting to send down its roots and to shoot forth its sprouts. My dear young friends, take heed! The world is intent on robbing you of your best strength, as Delilah did Samson; it will try to draw you into its service by holding up before you either the delusions of pleasure, or the scorn to which you will expose yourselves by an earnest confession and a godly life. And if it does not succeed in this, it will tempt you to indifference towards Him who in all eternity should be your most precious treasure.

And our own flesh? Ah, who will describe the inward battles! Every one of us has his favorite sin! and a single

sin which you love and foster, which you are loath to give up, may be the snare which causes your everlasting damnation.

Beloved in Christ! What should be, what will be your endeavor in view of these manifold dangers? What will be your conduct when placed face to face with such mighty and insidious foes? "Abide in Christ!" Abide not only in the blessed days when His communion imparts joy and happiness. Abide! even when He, as the faithful husbandman, uses the keen blade to purge you, his branches. Endure patiently; do not resist the Spirit, when He comes to chasten and punish; do not rebel when sacrifice and self-denial, crucifying of the flesh and partaking of the ignomy of Christ are demanded! Without His assistance it will indeed be impossible for you to endure, but *if ye abide in Him,* the Vine, you will not lack in due season the precious fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. You well know that our beloved Lutheran Church does not regard good works as the basis, cause or means of justification and salvation; we "conclude," with the great apostle, "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," by grace alone, for the sake of Christ; but you also are aware of the fact, that our Church, according to the Word of God demands good works as the proof and testimony of the grace which we have received, as marks and tokens of our adoption with God, as the fruit of justification. The Saviour comes and seeks fruit on the trees which He has planted and cared for; He desires to receive grapes from the branches that hang on Him, the Vine; He has the full right to demand the fruit, as truly as the branches abide in Him and draw from Him their sap and strength, life and nourishment. Therefore: ABIDE IN CHRIST! and ye will bring forth much fruit, wherein the Father is glorified. The branch, which bringeth no fruit, since it did not abide in the vine, is

cast forth and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. This will be our portion, if we do not abide in Christ, and this severe judgment would strike us all the harder, because we should then be constrained to confess: "I once was a branch on the Vine, Christ; I had the best of chances to bear fruit, but I withered, and am no more fit for anything but to be burned. It is my fault!" Do you wish to escape this judgment, dearly beloved? Do you wish to be preserved for life eternal? Then: ABIDE IN CHRIST!

Unto Thee, O, Thou true Arch-bishop of our souls, we pray in behalf of these, Thy sheep: Spread Thy blessing and protecting hands over them. And as Thou, in the days of Thy flesh, didst pray to the Father for thy disciples, so do Thou now, as our eternal High-priest on Thy throne of glory, intercede in our behalf, that we may be guarded against all evil!—He will do it; for faithful is He that calleth and our Lord is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. Prov. 2:7. Let this be our consolation. In His name we will daily run in the race and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And He, the God of Peace, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

R. Neumann.

ABIDING IN HIM.

I. John 2:28. And now little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

The Apostle John lived to a great age. This fact may account for his frequent use of the phrase "little children" in the later years of his life when speaking or writing to the Christians in his congregations. After he had grown so old and feeble that he was no longer able to preach, we are told that he was in the habit of having himself carried into the assembly of the congregation, and saying to them, "Little children, love one another."

The term "little children" was a term of endearment on his part. It gave expression to the relation of a spiritual father which he held toward those who had become members of the Church under his ministrations. It is with something of the same feeling that every pastor looks upon and addresses the catechetical class which he has instructed and is about to cornfirm; and it is in the same words which John once addressed to his congregation that I address you today, my friends: "And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." These words form a very appropriate admonition on this day of your confirmation. They may be regarded as calling attention to the present day and occasion by the words "and now." They emphasize the importance of your continuing a life of faith to the end by exhorting you, "abide in Him." They hold before you the ob-

ject to be attained by faithfulness on your part, namely, "that you may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." On the basis of these words we declare then that

THE DAY OF YOUR CONFIRMATION

I. Is a Mile-stone on the Way of Faith.

II. It is *only* a Mile-stone, and the journey must be continued to the end.

III. If you continue to the end, you shall have confidence and gladness at the Second Coming of Christ.

I. "And now," we say. A certain stage in the development of your Christian life has been reached. A certain portion of the way has been traversed. Along the narrow road that leads to life, this day of your confirmation stands out in bold relief as a mile-stone, marking off a certain definite portion of the way which you have thus far traversed, but just as certainly directing your attention forward to what is yet to come.

And what part of the way does this mile-stone mark as already traversed? What is the day of confirmation? What does it mean, and what is the significance of the rite which will soon be administered here? We sometimes hear it said of those who are being confirmed, that they are joining the Church. But is this correct? Does the Christian life begin only with the day of confirmation, or does it antedate that time?

There are, indeed, several among you, my dear friends, for whom this day will be memorable as the day on which you joined the Church. I refer to those among you who will receive adult baptism—who not having been baptized in infancy, are to have that Holy Sacrament administered to them today. For you this day is the day of your admission into the Chris-

tian Church, the day of your reception into sonship with God, the day to which you can ever look back as the one on which, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, you first obtained the real right to call God your Father and to bring your petitions before Him with the assurance that He regards you as His children for Christ's sake and hears your prayer.

But for the great majority of you, namely, for you who are about to be confirmed, this is not the day of your joining the Church, not the day on which you first obtain the right to call God your Father, not the day on which you first promised to be an obedient child. The day on which all this took place was the day of your baptism. You may have been and perhaps were an infant in arms when that baptism was administered. You were unable to speak for yourself; others spoke for you, others presented you before the Lord for the reception of His sacrament, and made in your name the vows and promises of faithful sonship. And yet when you were baptized as a little child, you became just as truly a member of the Church of Christ as you ever can or will become. We were just as much members of a human family when we were infants as we are now. Having grown older, we now appreciate the blessings and responsibilities of membership in that family as we could not appreciate them then. But they were just as surely ours then as now. The blessings were ours in fact; the responsibilities were ours in the germ. And it is just so with the baptized child. It is adopted into God's family on earth. It enjoys all the blessings of being a child of God. But the conscious fulfillment of the responsibilities of that divine sonship is, of course, a matter of later years.

The Lord Jesus never intended that children should be excluded from His Church on earth. He never meant that they should be allowed to grow up wild, as children of the world

and the devil, and that only when they have reached manhood or womanhood they should become His and enter His kingdom by a violent conversion. There certainly is joy among the angels of God when one such person is converted. But it is Christ's intention that children shall be brought to Him in their tender infancy, consecrated to Him in Holy Baptism, and trained up from their earliest years to believe in Him and serve Him. This has been done in the case of most of you. What then is the meaning of your confirmation? It is that *now,* having arrived at an age when you are able to think and speak for yourselves, you voluntarily testify before the assembled congregation that you value the baptismal covenant made between you and God in your infancy, and that you intend by the help of God to be faithful to it. You who come here to be baptized come to be received as God's children. You who have been previously baptized come rejoicing in the divine sonship which you already possess. But in both cases you come publicly to take upon yourselves in your own name the vows and promises of Christian discipleship. You here affirm that by the help of your Father in heaveen, you will live as becomes His children, renouncing the devil and all his works and ways, clinging in faith to the Triune God, and adorning your profession by a Christian life. This day, then, is the one on which you make a conscious intelligent choice and public profession of Christian discipleship.

It is also the day on which you are admitted to the full privileges of communicant membership in the Church. You have been instructed in the truths of the Christian religion. You have been taught them in the Sunday-school from your early years. You have been taught them in the course of catechetical instruction which you have just completed. And you have now reached the point where the Church says to you, "You may now be admitted to the Lord's Supper, you

may act as sponsor in Holy Baptism, you may exercise all the rights and privileges of adult membership. And this, properly speaking, is the significance of this day. You are now admitted to full communicant membership in the Christian Church. A stage in your Christian life's journey is completed; your early childhood days are over; you enter the ranks of those members of the Church to whom all the rights and privileges of Christ's kingdom appertain. May God grant you grace not only to assume those rights, but also to be faithful to the obligations which accompany them.

II. In the second place, we note that while the day of Confirmation is a mile-stone on the Way of Life, it is *only* a milestone. It is not the goal; it is not the end. When you have been confirmed, you are not thereby placed directly outside the gate of heaven, with nothing to do but wait till it is swung open for you to enter. You have passed over a portion of the way; but much remains yet to be traversed. In taking this step to-day you are following the admonition of Christ to confess Him. But it is only a part of the obedience which you owe to that admonition. Your whole life from this hour to your death is to be a confession of Christ your Saviour. Your present faith and your present profession will not avail you at last unless you continue to believe. If you are in Christ now by faith, that will not save you unless you abide in Him to the end. Therefore you must obey the exhortation of our text, "Abide in Him." Never forsake Him in whom you now profess to believe. Never turn your back upon Him or His Church. Never let the world, the devil and your own flesh wean you from the allegiance which you here promise. Never let your repentance vanish nor your faith fail. Abide in Him. He Himself exhorts you, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more

can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

If in the days to come you forget the vows you here record, and cease to be a true disciple of Jesus, the fact that you have been confirmed will not help you. The world contains many persons who seem to imagine that having once professed faith and been admitted to full membership in the Church, whether by confirmation, as in the Lutheran Church, or by any other method, they are now safe, and may do pretty much as they please. And they please to be careless and worldly. They seldom or never come to church, they never come to the Lord's Table; they seldom utter a prayer; they never read their Bible. They live, in fact, very much like those persons who never joined the Church. And yet because their name is on the roll, and they perhaps give a little toward the support of the church, they seem to imagine that they are spiritually safe and quite likely to get to heaven. But how grossly they delude themselves. The Christian's life is a journey on the narrow way to the end. It is a race for the crown, and is not won till the goal is reached. It is a good warfare, and is not victoriously concluded till the earthly life is finished and the soul departs in peace to its Saviour. The promise of the crown is bound up with the command, "Be thou faithful unto death." The hope of salvation is held out to him that endureth to the end.

No man ever yet won a crown or a prize by beginning a race and failing to continue; or a victory by beginning a battle and running away in the midst of it. And no man ever yet went to heaven just because in his youthful years he was confirmed. The confirmation is important, and it marks the completion of a certain part of the journey. It is a profession of faith, and, if the profession is sincere, a proof that you

are in Christ now. But if you would have confidence and not be ashamed when Christ comes to receive His own, you must abide in Him. The day of your confirmation must be followed by a life of faith throughout the remainder of your days.

Therefore abide in Him. And in order that you may do so, be careful that you do not despise nor neglect the means which He has ordained to keep you in Him. We cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come unto Him, but the Holy Ghost calls us through the Gospel and brings us to faith through it. And He employs the same means to establish and keep us in the faith. If, therefore, you would "abide in Him," you must hear and heed His Word. You must come regularly to God's house to hear it proclaimed. You must not let every little pretext or excuse keep you away. If you do, you will in a short time be weaned from God's house, from His Word, and from God Himself. The Lord's Day has been set apart for our soul's benefit. The preaching of the Gospel on that day is meant to upbuild and preserve us in the faith. But all the Sundays in the year and all the sermons preached on them will not benefit you unless you come to hear and heed.

Nor is God's Word given us simply to hear. It is given us also to read. You should each have your own individual copy of the Bible, and should read in it regularly, especially in the New Testament. You should make it a practice to read at least one chapter every day of your life. If you do, and also come regularly to hear the Gospel preached in God's house, then unless your reading degenerates into a lifeless habit and your attendance at church into a deaf hearing, the Word of God will build you up in the faith, root and ground you in it, and keep you steadfast in Christ Jesus unto life eternal.

And what is true of the Word of God as the chief means of grace is true also of the sacrament. The Lord comes to us in His Holy Supper to enter into our souls with all His precious gifts. He gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink,—that body and that blood which were given and shed for us for the remission of sins,—in order that our souls might each have the individual and perfect assurance that He died for *us* and that *we* have eternal life in Him. That Holy Supper is to be preceded by an earnest searching of heart, an honest examination of self, and a special service of confession and absolution, in order that we may be prepared for a worthy participation. Do not neglect the Lord's Table, as the manner of so many is. Live always in nearness to God, that your heart may long to commune with Him at His Table, and that each time the Holy Supper is administered you may come to it with contrite and believing heart to taste His blessed grace.

Neglect not to pray. You can no more live a spiritual life without prayer, than you can live a physical life without breathing. Let your first thoughts in the morning and your last thoughts at night be directed to the throne of grace from which all your mercies come. And from morning till night, wherever you may go and whatever you may do, ,let your heart be open toward God. Pray unceasingly. Commune with God constantly. Keep Him ever in your mind and heart.

Finally, strive to subdue sin. Seek the forgiving grace of God every day for your transgressions and shortcomings; and then daily resolve and strive to do better. However difficult it may be for you to stem the current of evil, let your boat of life ever be directed up stream and not down. Do not let yourself drift with the current of sin. Do not yield to the thousand temptations that come to you from within

and without; but fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Let your chief prayer and supplication be, not for ease of life nor length of days, but for grace to subdue sin and to do the will of God, to hallow His name and to live as a child of God should live.

If you will earnestly and persistently strive to obey these directions, you may rest assured, that He who has begun a good work in you will also perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ; and that, being in Christ in faith, you shall be enabled to abide in Him to the end.

III. And now behold the glorius reward of abiding in Christ: You shall have confidence and not be ashamed when He comes to receive His own. The world goes on from day to day, and it seems to some that it shall go on thus forever. But we know from the Holy Scriptures that it shall not. The trumpet shall sound; Christ shall return to the earth; the dead shall be raised; and they, together with those who are still alive, shall be summoned before Christ's throne. The feelings with which we shall greet the second coming of Christ depend entirely upon whether we abide in Him. Abiding in Him by faith, and trusting in His merit and righteousness, we shall have confidence. We shall have courage to appear before Him; for He Himself will be our Friend and Advocate. He will not and cannot reject or disown them that are His. He will know them and will welcome them. He will say to them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

But if you should be unfaithful and not be found abiding in Him when He comes, you would be filled with shame and confusion. For how would or could you face Him who died for you on the cross, who offered you free salvation, who surrounded you with every needful grace, and whose mercy

you nevertheless spurned? You could not face Him, and He would not recognize you as His. What that would mean, you know. To those who have forsaken and despised Him He will say, "Depart from me; I never knew you, ye that work iniquity." From such a dreadful dismissal from His throne to eternal despair, may God in mercy shield us all. He will shield us from it, if we are faithful. He will enable us to be faithful, if ye will but use diligently the means which He has ordained.

And now, little children, abide in Him. You have been instructed in the way of salvation. You today profess your faith in Christ. Abide in Him. Be faithful unto death. Endure unto the end. Then shall the crown of life be yours. And when Jesus comes to receive and glorify His own, you shall lift your eyes and hearts with confidence and gladness to hail and welcome Him as your Deliverer and Saviour. Amen.

J. S.

CONTINUE THOU.

II. Timothy 3:14. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.

The words of our text are St. Paul's words of advice and exhortation to Timothy, who had once been his catechumen. Though Timothy now was a preacher at Ephesus, the great apostle does not regard him as beyond the need of exhortation. No one ever gets beyond it in this world.

These words which St. Paul addressed to a former catechumen are very appropriate for the occasion which has brought us together here today. They contain sound advice and important admonitions which you, my young friends, who are about to be received into full communicant membership in the Church, will do well to heed and obey. To each of you, therefore, I say, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." On the basis of these words, let me urge upon you two important considerations:—

I. You have learned some things, and are to continue learning.

II. You are assured of some things, and are to continue steadfast in your assurance.

I. You have learned some things. You have been instructed in the things that concern your eternal salvation. Knowledge and instruction are important even, when the branches taught have to do only with our earthly station, work and well-being. But as the soul is of more value than

the body and eternity greater than time, instruction in spiritual things is more important still. The world has much to learn yet in this respect. Five entire days in each week are set apart for instruction in secular knowledge; and the children's capacity and strength are tried to the utmost in the effort to master a vast mass of earthly material, with the result, that little time and energy are left for instruction in religious truth. And thus that instruction which is of chief importance is today treated in the education of the young practically as a secondary matter; and a few minutes instruction in Sunday-school, and a brief course of catechetical lectures are all that the Church has at her disposal.

Yet in spite of these disadvantages, you have learned some things. You have learned some in the Sunday-School and in your homes; you have learned some in the catechetical class. And though it is impossible for the Church under present conditions in this country to impart to her children that measure of thorough instruction which it is to be hoped conditions at some future time will allow, I trust that a sufficiently solid basis of Christian knowledge has been laid in your minds and hearts to enable you intelligently to assume the vows and responsibilities of adult membership in the Church.

But I beg of you, do not imagine that, because you have now learned some things, you have learned all that you need to learn. Do not imagine that now, when you close your catechetical course and are confirmed, a further increase of your knowledge and understanding of spiritual things is unnecessary. The Apostle Peter says: "Grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus." And his exhortation was addressed originally, not to children, but to grown persons who had long been communicant members of the Church. Count his words, therefore, as addressed to you also, and remember that in the catechetical class you have not completed your re-

ligious education, but merely laid the basis for continued future growth. Do not throw your catechism aside, nor store it away among books which have outlived their usefulness. Keep it near at hand. Take it up frequently. Review the five parts of the catechism; fix them more and more firmly in your minds and hearts; meditate upon them; and seek in a prayerful spirit to arrive at a fuller comprehension of their meaning. Turn to the Ten Commandments to learn ever anew how holy and perfect God's law is, and how imperfect and sinful you still are. Study the creed and Luther's matchless explanation of its three articles, that you may realize more and more the greatness of the love and goodness which God manifests toward you in your creation and preservation, in your redemption by Christ Jesus, and in your calling and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Dip deeper into the meaning of that wonderful prayer of prayers which the Lord Himself has given us. Let your soul become more and more attuned to its heavenly harmony, and breathe its petitions with more fervent devotion. Contemplate frequently the precious privilege of being a child of God, adopted as His own for Christ's sake, and certain of eternal life if you only believe. Ponder over the significance of the Lord's Supper, and learn to appreciate with increasing thankfulness the privilege of partaking of that sacred feast. You will find, if you thus continue the study of your catechism, that you will not and cannot exhaust its riches in a life-time.

But do not confine yourself to the catechism. After all, the catechism derives its power from the Holy Scriptures. It is a food for the soul because its teachings are drawn from the Word of God. Make it a practice, therefore, to go to the fountain head daily: read your Bible. Have a set time for reading it. Do not defer nor neglect it. Remember that Christ bids you: "Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think

ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

Come regularly to God's house to hear His word preached. Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. You cannot remain a Christian, much less grow in grace and knowledge, if you despise and neglect God's house and Word. I know that there are some persons who say that they need not go to church, because they can read their Bibles at home. They can, but they do not. The very persons who neglect God's house on this plea are the ones who read their Bibles least. If you visited them at church time, you might find them, perhaps, reading the Sunday newspaper or a novel or a fashion-plate, but not the Bible.

You need the doctrine, the reproof, the correction, the instruction in righteousness which you can gain by attending regularly upon the services in God's house. And if you wish to grow and increase in Christian knowledge and faith and holy living, yes, if you wish to remain a Christian at all, you dare not neglect the hearing of God's Word. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

II. But you have not only learned some things; you have been assured of them. You believe them. Your coming here today to present yourselves before God's altar is your public testimony that you believe them. It is because you are assured of these things that you purpose now publicly to confess your faith in Christ your Saviour, and to promise fidelity to Him.

Some of you have already made this confession and promise through your sponsors when you were baptized as infants. And you now declare yourselves ready to renew and confirm with your own lips what was then done in your name. Others of you are here for the purpose of making for the first time this confession and promise, and of being admitted to

membership in the Church and sonship with God through Holy Baptism. Coming in sincerity, you come because of the things which you are assured of; because of your *faith* in the things which you have been taught.

And what are some of the things which you have learned and are assured of? You have studied the catechism, whose aim it is to make you wise unto salvation. From the first part of the catechism, the Ten Commandments, you have learned God's holy will and law. It has taught you that you are required to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself. But in teaching you this, it has also taught you that this is a requirement which you have not met and cannot fully meet. In other words, it has taught you that you are an imperfect, sinful being, who have deserved God's wrath and punishment, and must perish eternally unless delivered by God's mercy.

From the second part of the catechism, the Creed, and especially from the second article of that creed, you have learned to know God's wondrous grace and mercy. Unable to save yourself, God has saved you. Christ became man, and lived and died for you. He kept God's holy law in your place, and He suffered the punishment for your sins. For His sake God promises to forgive and save those who repent. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." You have learned and are assured that you cannot possibly earn heaven by your own goodness and righteousness, but that God will at last take you to heaven freely for Christ's sake if you trust in Him. "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

Further, you have learned and are assured that, while you

cannot earn heaven by your own goodness, you must, as believers, shun sin and strive by God's help to lead holy lives. The Christian dare not live in sin, but must, in love and gratitude to God for His marvelous grace, seek to please God by doing His will. The person who deliberately and wilfully sins, ceases to be penitent, and consequently ceases to be a Christian. A godly Christian life is the fruit and proof of faith. Where true faith is, the godly life will follow. Faith alone saves; but faith without works is dead.

These things you are assured of. Continue in them. Be steadfast in your faith, and be true to your Lord. You are about to renounce the devil and all his works and ways. You are about to confess before men that you believe in God the Father, your Creator and Preserver; in God the Son, your Redeemer and Saviour; in God the Holy Ghost, your Sanctifier and Guide. You are about to promise that by God's help you will continue steadfast in this faith to your end, and will live a godly life in accordance with it. O, keep in mind the exhortation of our text and "continue in the things which you have heard and are assured of." Be faithful; be true. Forsake not your Lord and Saviour, but keep the vows you here record.

You confess that you are a guilty, sinful creature, and that your only hope of salvation lies in God's mercy in Jesus Christ your Saviour. O, continue daily to turn from sin in true repentance and trust in the wounds of Jesus. Let no day pass by in which you do not pray earnestly from the heart, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Seeking God's mercy thus, continue to believe that God actually does forgive you all your sins and counts you righteous for Christ's sake. And while you thus daily turn from sin and seek God's mercy, continue to strive after true holiness of heart and life. Seek to subdue and

overcome every remnant of the old evil nature. Give the grace of God free room in your heart. Weed out the sinful desires and lusts which would choke and destroy your faith.

Remember that not he who once upon a time made a good confession before many witnesses shall receive at last the crown of life, but he that is faithful unto death. He that endureth to the *end,* the same shall be saved. If you should endure a week or a month or a year or nine-tenths of a lifetime, yet fall away at last, you would be lost. Therefore *continue* thou in the things which thou hast learned and art assured of. Stand fast in the faith. Be steadfast and immovable. Walk faithfully upon the narrow way that leadeth unto life, remembering that, though wide is the gate and broad is the way of sin and pleasure, and many there be that go in thereat, it is the way that leadeth unto eternal destruction.

If you are sincerely in earnest, pray fervently for God's help, and faithfully use the Word of God and the sacraments, God will give you the grace and strength which you need. He will not forsake you, unless you deliberately forsake Him. Therefore cling to Him, pray to Him, serve and obey Him. Continue in the things which you have learned and are assured of. Then shall you be Christ's own, and His blessed words will apply to you when He says: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." Amen.

J. S.

THE GUIDE OF YOUTH.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. Jer. iii, 4.

We have met this morning on a very interesting and solemn occasion. We are about to receive a number of persons, to membership into the church, by the impressive rite of confirmation. It is a scene which should be witnessed with deep interest, by the whole congregation. A scene upon which angels, no doubt, look down upon with intense delight, and which calls forth the loudest, sweetest songs of praise; a scene which the Saviour himself delights to witness; a scene which causes the pastor's heart to rejoice; but which at the same time causes him anxious solicitude, and trembling apprehensions; a scene which parents, sisters and brothers of those who are to be confirmed, should especially look upon with deep and heartfelt anxiety and ardent prayer. This is a time, my dear young friends, to you who are about to take the most solemn vows, of great moment, pregnant with consequences, the most momentous, the most happy, if you remain faithful, the most fearful, if you should prove unfaithful.

The addition of members to a congregation imposes special duties upon each member of the church, to feel an interest in them, to give them an example and pray for them.

The adding of members is often considered as a matter of course, and little interest is taken in them, nothing done for them, they are often forgotten and lost sight of. No wonder, under such circumstances that many turn back again to the

world. Let us all, pastor, people and friends, hold up their hands, encourage their hearts, and let our fervent, believing and persevering prayers ascend to the throne of grace in their behalf. My dear young friends, you this day enroll yourselves among the followers of Christ, and profess to set out upon a Christian life. Imagine not that amidst your surroundings, you will have no difficulties; that by your own strength you will be enabled to overcome them; relying upon your own strength you will fail, for even the apostle felt his own weakness, and exclaimed, "Not as though we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," (2 Cor. v. 2.)

Think not, that by your own prudence, wisdom and foresight you can guide and direct yourselves, you need a better and unerring guide. There is one who appeals to you in the most affectionate and urgent manner, Wilt thou not from this time, (this day of your solemn expousals,) cry unto me? My father thou art the guide of my youth.

The words of the text contain an appeal to the young in general, and especially to you, who are about to dedicate yourselves to God. It is the appeal of a kind and affectionate parent, who feels the deepest interest in your welfare. Can you disregard it?

It is a particular personal appeal, Wilt thou, not from this time, cry unto me, my Father, thou art, thou shalt from henceforth be the guide of my youth. It is however, not only a personal appeal, wilt thou, but it appeals also to our consciousness of the obligations resting upon us, from the consideration of privileges enjoyed. Thou, who hast been reared under religious influences; the subject of many prayers; who hast been consecrated to God's service in holy baptism; who has attended a course of lectures; whose life has been crowned with so many mercies, and prolonged to this day; who are convinced, you ought to dedicate yourself to God, and have

resolved to do so this day. Now in view of your conscionsness of these facts, this appeal in the text is made to you.

The young especially need a guide; a competent guide. The prophet taught by his own experience declared (Jer. x. 23,) "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps." David prayed, "Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths," (Ps. xxv. 4.) At all times, especially in our day, when surrounded with so many allurements, temptations and evil examples, do the young need a guide under such circumstances. The question often arises, where withal shall a young man cleanse his way? and the only sure answer that can be given is by taking heed thereto, according to thy word.

They need a guide, because they are in danger. They are in danger from the very sprightliness and vivacity of youth; unsuspicious and easily captivated by appearances, they are ready to fall in with the views and practises of those around them; they are in danger from their own inexperience; they have entered upon, to them, an untrodden path; like a traveller who takes a journey through an unknown country, not acquainted with difficultiees which beset his path—there are so many diverging roads, and many travellers, some taking one, and other another course—as such an one needs a competent guide, and a correct chart to direct him, so those who enter upon a religious course need a safe guide and a correct chart, upon which their course is clearly marked out.

But where can such a guide be found, upon whom can they safely rely, and who is willing to guide them all their journey through? Many imagine they are sufficient to guide themselves, they have tried it, and have failed. Some have followed the many living guide posts they have met on every side, and have been led into the paths of unbelief, wordliness, forgetfulness of God, into degrading vices.

There is but one safe guide, the Lord Jesus. He graciously offers himself to us, and urges us now from this time to accept of him and submit ourselves to his direction. He is a faithful and sure guide. He will guide us by his word, and his word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path. He will guide us by his counsel through life and afterwards receive us to glory. He guides us by enlightening our minds, by influencing us by his Holy Spirit, by bringing us into and under the influence of the church. Submit yourselves to this guide, make the word of God the rule of your life, and fervently pray, O Lord! be thou the guide of my youth.

A. H. Lochman.

HOW WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

A Preparatory Sermon for First Communion.

There are hours in the life of every one which are of highest importance and decisiveness for time and for eternity. Happy he, who uses these opportunities according to God's holy will; who receivees their blessings with a believing soul; who gives room to the Holy Spirit to work out within him the peaceful fruits of righteousness. But woe unto him, who wrapped in carelessness and frivolity, lets these golden opportunities pass by, never heeding the advantages for working out his salvation which they afford.

What has been neglected once is often lost forever. For this reason the Word of God so earnestly admonishes, *"To-day,* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

My dear young friends: That was a decisive hour for your lives which you experienced last Sunday, at your confirmation. You were reminded of all the wholesome instruction which you had received. The happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked were set before you, the one for imitation, the other for warning. The question of Jesus, primarily put to the disciples, was asked also of you: *"Will ye also go away?"* (John 6:27.) And you with one accord did answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John, 6:68-69.)

With gladness of heart and thanksgiving towards God have we listened to your public confession. Now another

holy hour has come, the hour in which for the first time you are to partake of the Sacrament of the Altar; the hour in which your hearts may enjoy blessed communion with Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to whom you have vowed faithfulness for life. Woe to him, if a Judas were found among you, who would eat and drink unworthily! Oh, how many there have been to whom in the course of time the words of holy writ had to be applied: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not at all of us." (I. John, 2:19). From this may our heavenly Lord preserve you forever!

Now you may ask: "How shall we celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar? In what spirit shall we commune?" To this question I can give no other answer than that which you have learned in the catechism: *He is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins."* And in connection with this answer, I call to mind the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, as found in Corinthians 11:23-29.

Taking these words as our standpoint, we will endeavor to show explicitly:—

HOW WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. With heartfelt thanks towards God the Father, for all His grace and mercy.

2. With devout love to God, the Son, for His saving sacrifice.

3. With willing submission to God, the Holy Ghost, for guidance in life.

Dearly beloved, old or young, who are now preparing to meet the Lord at His blessed table, what is more natural at this hour than that your hearts should be filled with praise and thanksgiving to God, the Father, who has so abundantly blessed you in body and soul, who has preserved you unto this day; who has guarded you against all danger, saved you from need, protected you against sickness and death; who by day and by night has kept you in the hollow of His hand.

You parents realize what it means to bring up a child, as it is required in our ritual of Holy Baptism, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." You know how much vexation and trouble, how much anxiety and care, how much misery and grief of heart it involves, and how entirely impossible it is to reap good without God's blessing and grace, without Jesus, without—religion. And do not you, my dear young friends, at this point recall the love, the faithfulness, the care, which your parents have shown toward you in the days that are past? Do you realize the debt which you have accumulated towards them? How often have you failed to recompense their love and faithfulness! And all of us as we think of our debt to God, the giver of all grace and mercy, must remember how often has it been unfaithfulness for faithfulness, sin for grace, stubbornness and disobedience for longsuffering and forbearance. Take our course in the time past and hold it up in the light of God's kindness toward us, and our thankfulness for God's grace must become deep and humble, as we cry out, "Unworthy, unworthy!" We must confess that day after day it has been new lovingkindness instead of well-deserved punishment. How have we fallen from that baptismal grace, by which we became His own!

Of a truth, such reflections must cause our pulse-beats to quicken, and lead us to realize anew the truth of the apos-

tle's words, "We love Him, because He first loved us." (I. John 4:19).

Today for the first time you will approach the table of the Lord, my dear young people. In this holy Sacrament you will receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through it, as once before in holy Baptism, the highest gift attainable here on earth will be bestowed and granted anew: Remission of sins, life and salvation. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." With what other feeling, then, could you approach the table of our Lord than with devout love to God, the Son, who surrendered to death in order to redeem you from your sins. Through his atoning sacrifice he secured for you life and salvation. Through His grace He has made you partakers of His glorious gifts. Great is the love of a true shepherd for his sheep, which he feeds, protects, and seeks, when they are lost; greater still is the love of a parent to the child of his flesh, for whom he is willing to bear all hardships and self-denials; but greatest of all is the love of Him, who is Love personified, who for us all made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Greatest of all love is that of the Saviour, who bore our grief and carried our sorrows; upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid and with whose stripes we are healed. His love is stronger by far than death itself. His love to us chose the cross, while he could have had the glory of heaven. His love wanted to die in order that we might live! His love it is that has given us this feast commemorative of His miracle of love, His holy Supper, in which He continually shows and proves himself the bread which came from heaven and the food of everlasting life. Therefore, hear it once more: "We love Him, because

He first loved us!" With devout love to Him let us come to His banquet of love. And let every drop of blood within us be consecrated to Him for loving service.

III.

For it is in our daily walk that our love to Him must be evidenced. Only such He terms love as is shown in a life of faith and love. We must, therefore, in coming to His Holy Sacrament, submit ourselves entirely to God, the Holy Ghost, for guidance in life.

Again I address you parents, who by the grace of God have been able to bring your children to this hour, in spite of many sins, mistakes, and bad habits, both your own and theirs; and you also, the congregation of Christ, everyone of whom is what he is by the grace of Christ, having been led by the strong arm of God, the Holy Ghost, through danger of body and soul; and likewise you children, just confirmed in Christ Jesus, who in spite of many disregards of the commandments of God and the will of your parents, have come to this hour, preserved by grace to meet the Lord here in His temple and in His Sacrament: New temptations will meet you, new allurements will surely beset your way. Satan waits even now to assail you and at all hours will ply you with his wiles. You must work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. You will have to bear, suffer, struggle, endure, deny, resign, yes fight to the blood. Now, how will you endure to the end, how will you succeed in abiding "faithful unto death," how prosper in holding fast that which you have, that no man may take your crown? How can you prevail for just one hour?

I know of only one means by which you can attain it, one way in which you may reach it. Walk by faith, undauntedly, without wavering, in the royal way of the cross, *in the strength*

of the Holy Ghost. He alone can protect you, and enable you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour. He alone can help you to live by faith in Jesus Christ. Give yourselves to the protection of the Spirit of Him who prayed for you: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." (John 17:11, 15, 17.)

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14.) Let us unite our hearts and voices in the beautiful prayer of the Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit with me." (Psalm 51, 12.) And now, after this blessed service, when your hearts have been filled with love to the Saviour, when by faith, you have seen Him and He has come to you with remission of sins, O, go back to your home and to your daily life with holy vows of faithfulness, and with souls resigned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And, come hither again, come often; come whenever the Lord dispenses His grace anew in the Sacrament. Whenever your faith threatens to waver, when your love seems to grow cold, your patience is tried, your hope of salvation becomes dim, come, come to the table of your Saviour and receive out of His fulness "grace for grace."

Jesus, Master of the feast,
The feast itself thou art:
Now receive Thine every guest,
And comfort every heart,
Give us living bread to eat,
Manna that from heaven comes down;
See us waiting at Thy feet,
And make Thy favor known.

In this earthly wilderness
Thou hast a table spread,
Richly filled with every grace
Our fainting souls can need;
Still sustain us by Thy love,
Still Thy servant's strength repair,
Till we reach Thy courts above,
And feast forever there. Amen.

R. Neumann.